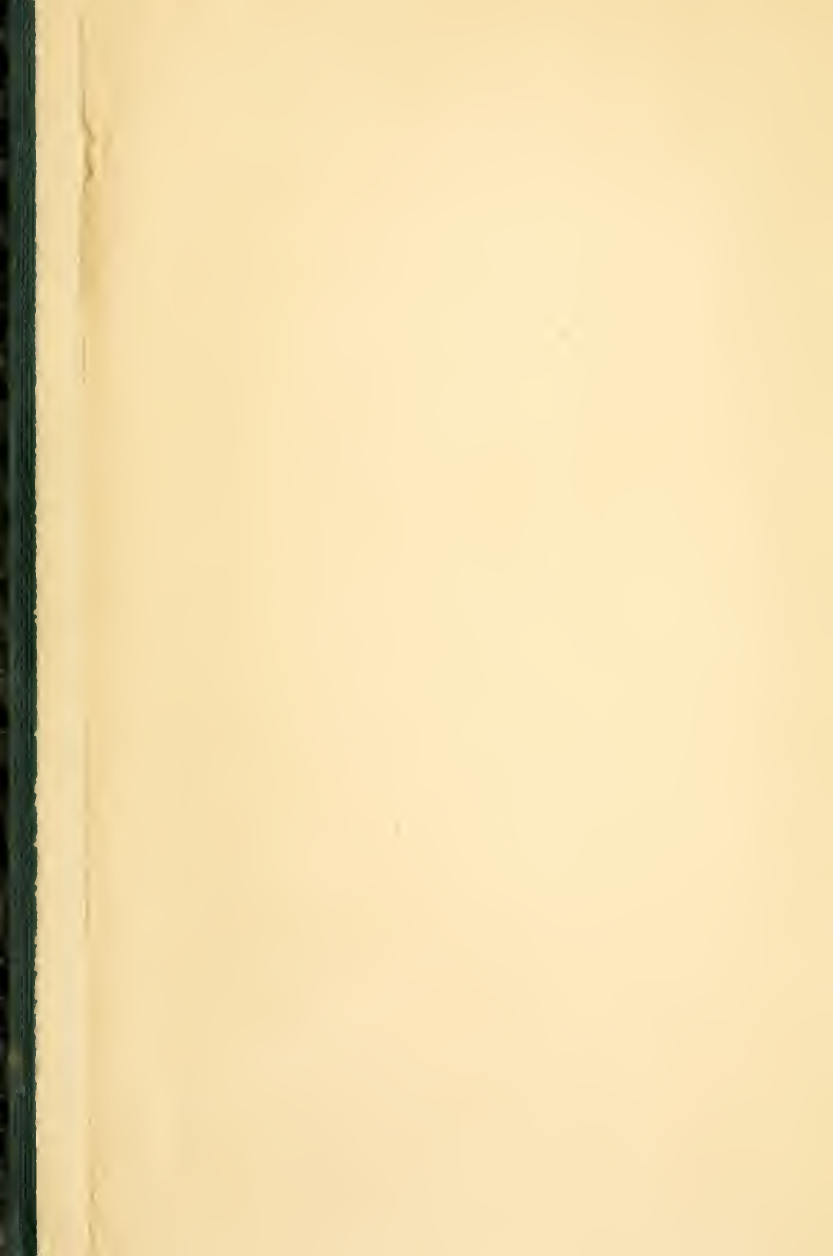




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LITTLE ANNA MARK

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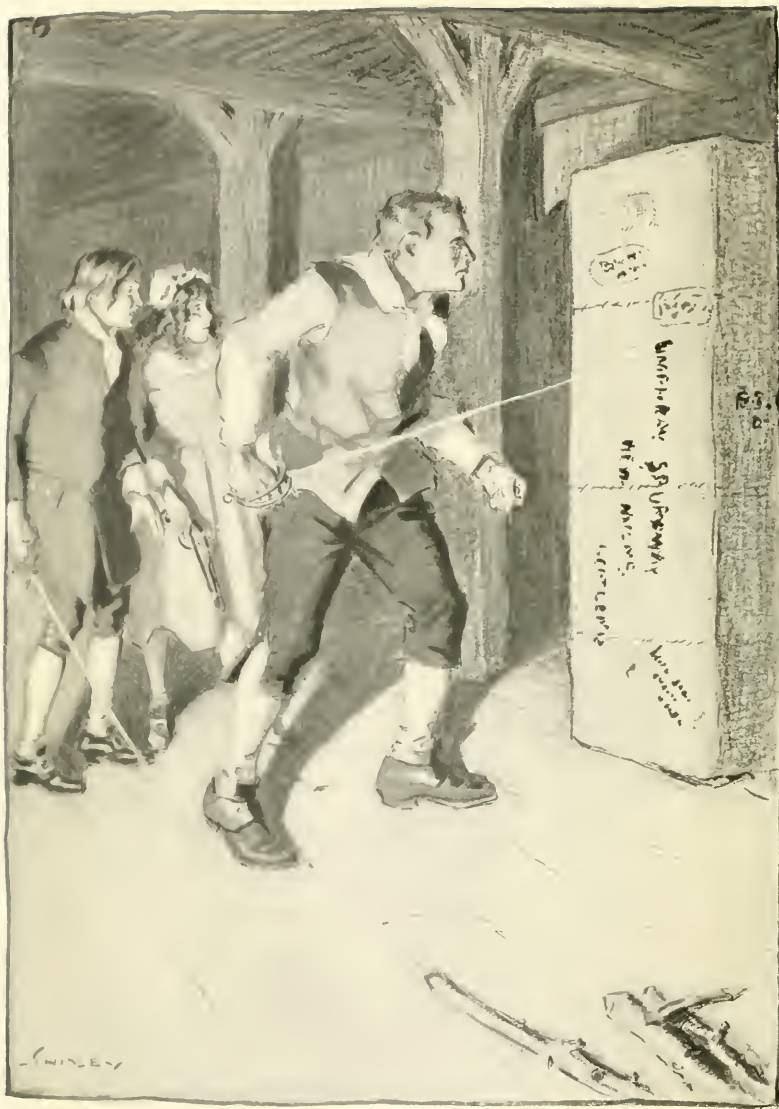
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KIT KENNEDY
JOAN OF THE SWORD HAND

SWEETHEART TRAVELLERS
SIR TOADY LION



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"THEN HE COUNTED SLOWLY, 'ONE!' . . . "

[Page 120.]

LITTLE ANNA MARK

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

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LITTLE ANNA MARK

CHAPTER I

I MEET MY FATHER

“COME in hither, Joe Janet! Here you will see at one eye-blink the whole cursed pack kennelled, the lying priest that slandered me, the fatted English calf that disinherited me, and the gap-toothed old hound that begat me—and did me other disservices beside!”

These are the first words that ever I remember hearing my father speak—clearly, that is, for I must have both seen and heard him often enough in my innocence before that I grew word-conscious.*

I can recall the scene yet as clear in my mind’s eye—aye, clearer than the dinner I have this day eaten or the pattern on the flowered-silk waistcoat which lies folded in the drawer at my elbow.

It was in the wide kitchen or house-place of James Brydson’s change-house (or common wayside inn), which sits on the brae overlooking the little Scottish town of New Milns. A low door it had, to enter which your head had to bow and your feet simultaneously to descend

* Of the truth of this part of Philip Stansfield’s strange narrative any reader may assure himself by turning to the series of “State Trials” in So., vol. xi., the last paper in the book.

LITTLE ANNA MARK

till with a crick and double twist of the spine presently you found yourself within, and after the sunshine blinking and sneezing in the bluish smother of the peat reek that billowed and bellied between you and the thatch. But Brydson's inn was mostly frequented by cloth weavers, and they had bowed backs anyway. So its peculiarity of access mattered little, though now and then there were cursings when a gentleman or hill farmer broke his head on the crossbeam.

I remember I was sitting on a creepie stool by the peat fire warming my feet at the red glow and admiring the glinting of the little flames on my new silver shoe-buckles. I had gone thither from the Lodge Yett, which was then my mother's dwelling, clinging to my grandfather's hand. As I went my feet had hardly touched the ground, so firm a hold he took of my wrist and such long strides as he conquered the ground withal. Sir James Stansfield of New Milns he was called, a fine, upstanding, well-regarded man as any in all that country, reverend of demeanour, gracious of speech, and exceeding seemly to the eye with his broad-brimmed hat, wide-skirted coat of fine blue cloth, white silk undercoat, white stockings, and the silver buckled shoes that were copies in great of mine. There was no finer gentleman in all the southlands of Scotland than my grandfather.

He seemed at once to ennoble and to illuminate that rude, smoky little hostelry as he sat in the high-backed elbow-chair and tapped the bare boards lightly with his glove tips. With him were Mr. John Bell, preacher of the gospel, in whose discourse my grandfather sometimes delighted (at other times he would laugh heartily at his simplicity), and Umphray Spurway, the cloth manufacturer—a great red Englishman from Yorkshire, at whose

I MEET MY FATHER

laugh you seemed to see the rafters dirl as he threw back his head and blattered applause with his palm on the white-scoured deal of the inn table till all the pewter tankards applauded also.

To these three gentlemen, sitting at their wine in the change-house kitchen of New Milns that snowy December night in the year of our Lord's grace 16— there entered a fourth, and with him presently a fifth, at sight of whom silence fell upon the men and constraint upon the womenfolk. James Brydson, the landlord, was out upon his occasions, and I mind nothing of him. But Mistress Brydson, the landlady, sat in the corner by a flickering cruisie lamp, knitting deftly and silently as a spider spinning a web across a window-pane; smiling good-humouredly also all the while, as she glanced up and caught the eye of this one and that among her guests, proud, I ween, that Sir James himself did not disdain to leave his great furnished house to sit with his guests in her humble kitchen. A proud woman, as all might see, was Lucky Brydson, smiling and beeking at her ease as the white bone knitting pins clicked and twinkled in the cross lights. Shyly and at times slyly whispering, nodding, pinching, giggling, and confiding secrecies to each other as girls will, her two daughters, Elspie and Margit, stood by the door of the inner room, where the entrance to the cellar was. I suppose they were bonny enough rosy-cheeked wenches. I was not yet of an age to note or care. But this I know, that Elspie was kind to me, and often gave me fine farles of cake with honey in the comb spread thereon liberally. Therefore I had no fault to find with Elspeth Brydson that night or any night, but sat composedly enough munching my piece and dusting the crumblings from my hosen, lest, when I returned to New Milns, my

LITTLE ANNA MARK

grannie's eye should note that I had been eating between meals; a heinous sin in the decalogue of the Lady Griselda Stansfield, which, like the original, must indeed have been written upon two tables of stone.

The talk had been brisk and merry all the evening, and such of it as I can remember now goes to show how debonnair and kind my grandfather was when he escaped from his wife's leading strings for an hour, unbinding his wits and ungirding his waistband in a place where mirth was not counted ungodliness or laughter compared (with trite asperity) to the crackling of thorns under a pot.

"Ha, Elspie, lass," he cried, when he came in, crooking a finger to the elder maid by the inner door, "come hither to my knee. Nay, what, never bashful? Why, 'tis but yesterday that you would have run to it and climbed for kisses. And to-day you are as welcome—every whit!"

Whereat right merrily Umphray Spurway, the great Englishman, laughed, but not so the minister, Mr. John Bell.

The girl came forward, slowly lifting the corner of her white apron with one hand and picking blushfully at it with the other.

Sir James lifted one of the brazen candlesticks and held it up, so that its light fell on the perturbed face and shrinking figure of this tall slip of a lass.

"Ods fish!" he cried, "this will never do. I must go find a match for you, my lady. You grow overly handsome. We shall have heads cracked, and all the young gamecocks of the neighbourhood tearing at each other's combs for your sake. I am a magistrate, and I will not have the lads quarrelling in my parish if I can help it. Mistress Brydson, I must have this pretty

I MEET MY FATHER

Elspeth of yours shackled and handcuffed ere she begin to breed ill-blood among our youth."

The girl tossed her head and bridled like a wilful country beauty.

"I desire not to be wedded," she said, biting at a strand of her own flowing dark hair, as if she had a spite at it; "it is a poor business, besides——"

"Bravo! well said, my lass," cried the Englishman, smiting his knee; "'tis an opinion I have always held myself."

"Hush, Umphray! Besides *what*, Elspie?" persisted Sir James, wishing to hear how the lass would finish her sentence.

"Besides," she hesitated, "there are many wed who would give all they possess to be unwed again. I want not to make one more."

Sir James laughed outright, while his two friends discreetly looked hard at the table.

"A shrewd lass, and, faith," he said, "very true—very true. I know some such myself. But all the same it is not well becoming in my jurisdiction that such a pretty one should lack an husband, so long Umphray Spurway, great English lout that he is, hath neither wife to keep him warm anights, nor bairn to heir his goods and go clad in cloth of his weaving. Look to it, man! Look to it!"

At this the great red Englishman laughed, being well pleased, as all men are when they are rallied concerning women.

"Ah, Sir James," he said, speaking with a curious burr in his utterance, "had I indeed lands and houses, milns and water powers like you, I had not so long been eating the bread of an hireling's baking. Elspie here is a pretty lass and an honest, but I wot well she knows her

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value far too well to have aught to say to an old grey-beard Englishman!"

By this the lass had recovered from her first daunting and found the sharp tongue wherewith to hold her own, which comes naturally to women bred and born in inns and hostelries.

"Never before have I gotten the chance to say either 'yea' or 'nay' to that, Master Umphray Spurway," she said, dropping her pinafore and standing with her hands behind her a little defiantly; "but, after all, 'tis better late than after dark," as the saying is!"

Sir James laughed loud and heartily, and even the minister chuckled over his cup of wine.

"There you have it to the hilt, Umphray," cried Sir James. "'Tis a fair challenge. Speer her, man, speer her! We will be your witnesses, bonny lass!"

"And by mine office I will wed you here across the table if you get him to agree!" added the minister, speaking for the first time.

With his usual good humour Umphray Spurway made an attempt to recover himself. He laid down the small brown-bowled witch's pipe he had been contentedly smoking.

"Well, my lass," he said, "listen to me. Tell us whether you would prefer to have me or my 'prentice, Henry Bowman, with whom I saw you so canty at the gable-end to-day. He is a limber lad and likely of his face."

"Mean you for a husband or for a lad to court me?" queried the girl, as prompt as an echo at the wood's edge.

"For a husband of course," quoth Sir James before the other could reply.

"Then I choose Umphray Spurway, the cloth mer-

I MEET MY FATHER

chant!" cried Elspie Brydson. "Lads' bonny faces make lasses' bare downsittings!"

"A wise lass—remarkable," mused Sir James, nodding slyly to the company at large. Then turning to the Englishman, he went on like one giving good and welcome advice: "Guid's truth, I do not think that ye could do better, Umphray. Think of it, man!"

And it was while the cloth weaver hummed and hawed and shifted his legs first over one knee and then over the other, thumbing the dottle all the time into the bowl of his pipe, that I first heard my father's first spoken words, as I have reported them at the beginning.

"Come your ways in here, my Joe Janet!"

Looking up I saw a tall swarthy-visaged man standing erect by the outer door and reaching back a hand to one who stood without on the steps half-bowed to enter, yet reluctant to descend. Philip Stansfield was at this time of a fiery visage, with eyes a little bloodshot, his cheeks mottled like day-old butcher's meat on a stall, and all his gay clothing was tashed and frayed at sleeve and braiding. Yet through all disguises it was the face my mother looked at every night when she rose, sobbing, from saying her prayers and opened a little leathern case which lay beside her Bible on the service stand of her bedroom. I had looked at it a thousand times when she was in the garden or gone up to the Great House.

And, though no one had ever told me, I knew that the man I looked upon was my father.

He stood on the threshold with a naturally gallant air, one hand on the hilt of his sword and the other, as I say, reached back to pull his companion within.

She came, shame-red and smirking, a smooth-faced apple-cheeked youngish woman, slatternly, careless of dress, short of skirt and lavish of shoulder, a blue ribbon

LITTLE ANNA MARK

cris-crossing loosely over her breasts and only half holding her bodice together. This woman laughed a nervous fleeing laugh when she found herself in face of the grave trio seated at the table, who turned with one accord to look at her. Yet a moment after she seemed to care nothing for them, and centred her disdainful attention upon the women on the other side of the inn kitchen. For, as I say, she was indeed very buxom and hoydenish of form and feature, but (this I learned afterward) there was no steadfast or housewifely look in her eyes. And that, after all, is the way to tell a good woman.

The young man with the haughty air and handsome damaged countenance took his hand from his sword and pointed scornfully round the table.

“Look, Janet,” he cried, “look well at them. There sit all the three. For a silver groat I would send them all blithely to hell—aye, and swing for them in the Grass Mereat in the morning, Janet!”

The rosy mirth of the wine heat had ebbed quickly from my grandfather's lips. He gripped the table to steady himself—not that he was in the least overcome with fear or apprehension, but that he might worthily say that which he had to say.

“Philip,” he murmured, and then put his fingers to the goffered frill of his neckerchief. “Philip, my lad, you are my eldest son. Will you not take warning and lead a new life? Gladly would I forgive you for the sake of the bairn I learned to say his prayers kneeling at my knee. Put away this wicked wanton woman that has made you live like a beast. Return to your true wife. She greets for you. She prays for you. Look upon this child——”

My grandfather had now his hand upon my head, for

I MEET MY FATHER

I had run to him at the first sight of my father. He would have said more. I could hear his heart thumping in his side and his breath wheezing dryly in his throat. But at this moment the woman broke in shrill revilings, demanding furiously who he was thus to filch from her her good name.

"I would have you know that I am an honest man's wife!" She shouted the words at him like throwing stones.

Sir James' eyes were steady on her face.

"Said you by any chance," he inquired gravely, "'a man's honest wife'?"

He dropped his words quietly as a fisher drops a bait into a pool.

At which the woman swore a horrid oath and turned away to escape the questioning eyes of those present. She even made as if to leave her companion and go over to the other side of the fireplace, where Mistress Brydson still sat knitting with her daughters gathered in close beside her like chickens when the hawk hovers. But the womenfolk of the house readily divining her intent, gathered the skirts of their kirtles closely about them and swept off into the inner room. The door slammed in her face, and with a heartsick little laugh the woman returned to the side of her paramour. There was no weakness in his attitude.

Philip Stansfield stood browbeating all that were in the inn kitchen except perhaps Umphray Spurway, the Englishman, who sat sipping his stone ale contemptuously and smiling in a way that was a vast admiration to me to behold.

CHAPTER II

THE LASSIE BAIRN

THEN the minister man uprose as if in a pulpit, and lifted his hand with great appearance of solemnity, which made the Englishman to cough behind his palm. For Master Bell began to exhort the young man and the woman to repent and put away their sin, citing instances of well-accredited reformations both from Scripture and (as he added) from the records of profane history.

But this timely and improving rebuke did the young man no good. Nay, it even made him more angry than before, such being the hardness of the human heart.

“Out upon you, canting hound,” he cried, breaking in on the preacher’s sermonising. “I tell you plainly that had I as muckle to fill my belly as a groat a day, I would never trouble my father again.”

“Come this night only up to the Great House,” continued Mr. Bell, “bide to supper and the worship of the family altar. Then will I beseech for you a new heart. I feel that for this very purpose I have been sent to New Milns from the wicked city of Edinburgh.”

“The devil fly away with my father and you both—to Edinburgh, and farther if he will! Think you I would frequent his table to have him forever grinning at me like a sheep’s head on the tongs? Ye dog in bandstrings” (here he broke out in sudden fury), “what is your concern in the matter? Know you to whom ye speak?”

THE LASSIE BAIRN

Philip Stansfield suddenly left the woman's side. He strode across to where I stood trembling at my grandfather's elbow, clutching his coat-sleeve.

"And so this pucker is my son—the bantam that hath disinherited his own father. I will have no more folly. I will take him and he shall learn to chop wood and scour pots for them that really love me. He hath a face like a dish-clout, and I doubt not the spirit of a sheep maggot. But Janet and I will train him better. Faith, we will see if the law of the land will deny a son to his own father."

What would now have happened I know not, for at his son's threat Sir James sat still, and, as it were, bereft of speech. But Umphray Spurway, who up to this time had been listening with a smile on his lips, suddenly whipped a pair of pistols out of his pockets and laid them bended on the table before him.

"Enough and to spare of ill talk," he said; "out of this house with you on the instant, Philip Stansfield, you debauched man and blasphemer of your father!"

The young man was bold enough, but the pistols daunted him sorely, and with a shrill cry of fear his companion clasped his arm to draw him away.

"As for you, Janet Mark," Spurway continued, speaking to the woman, "you shall be whipped from here to Moreham—aye, if I have to lay on the lashes myself!"

At which, after a volley of oaths from Philip Stansfield and a snarling like that of a trapped wild beast from his companion, the pair went forth into the night, vowing vengeance upon us all.

The three gentlemen sat a long time silent without touching the wine which remained, nor so much as emptying their glasses. Then Umphray Spurway rose.

"Let us take the boy home to his mother," he said.

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And with that he handed one of the pistols to Sir James, reserving the other for himself. The minister placed himself next to my grandfather on the inner side, and commended his life and work to God in moving words. I thought he might have spared a prayer for my grandfather and me, but he did not.

In this order we were just about to go up the steps of Brydson's change-house, and adventure forth into the night, when of a sudden before us there appeared the strangest and quaintest little figure.

A lassie bairn stood at the door barring the way—a girl of six years or thereby. Her head was a tangle of brown curls, which the firelight netted with gold. Her eyes danced light. Her mouth smiled redness. She herself seemed to smile and dance as if she could hardly keep her feet still. I thought she looked kindly and pretty and little more than a babe, but at sight of her the womenfolk of the house came running indignantly forward to thrust her forth.

“My mither—where have ye put my mither?” cried the child.

“Oot o’ this, deil’s brat!” they answered as with one voice, and would have driven her forth into the night with their hands, but that she seemed to flit before them up the steps and to disappear in the darkness. After a moment’s hesitation Umphray Spurway followed, and we all found ourselves in the crisp silence of the winter’s night. I looked all about me for the little figure in the dress of red soldier’s-blanket, but I saw her not. It was cold, and a stray pellet of hail or two spat in our faces, for the frost was too keen to let the snow come down with any freedom, though the sough of the wind from the north told us that it was not far away.

For several hundred yards beyond the circle of the

THE LASSIE BAIRN

yellow lights of the change-house windows the street of the village of New Milns is bounded by the kirkyard wall. As we passed along I think we all looked up apprehensively to it. And I for one felt certain all that while that Philip Stansfield's gun barrel would be peering down upon us from its long irregular ridge.

But what we made out was quite different. Again we saw the little girl. She stood erect upon it, just by the lintel of the gatepost, her blanket-swathed figure blotting out a slim belt of stars. Again we heard her voice speaking to us as it had done on the steps of the inn.

"My mither! Ill men, what have ye done with my mither?"

"Go home, little one," cried Sir James; "go home where you belong. 'Tis no seemly hour for a bairn to be sitting on the wall of the kirkyaird."

"I want my mither! I will not gang hame without my mither!"

The answer came down to us with a strange lilt to it as if the speaker were speaking and dancing too. Then after a pause——

"And I'm no sittin', I'm standin'. I want my mither."

"We do not know your mither, nor where she is," said Sir James. "Go home when you are bidden like a good lass. And if ye are feared to gang, tell your mither that I said ye were no to be lickit this time for bidin' oot late."

"And wha are ye that bids folks that gate?" cried the elf's voice from the wall, shrewdly.

"I am Sir James Stansfield," said my grandfather simply. Whereat from the kirk dyke came peal on peal of the strangest merriest laughter, like bells on horses' harness heard across the snow.

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“Why do you laugh at my name, bairn?” my grandfather asked with a certain sternness.

The laugh stopped short as if cut off with shears.

“Because my mither laughs like that when she lays oot your washin’,” she answered.

“Lays out my washing?” said my grandfather uncertainly.

“Aye,” returned the child; “when my mither folds up the linen sheets she aye laughs when she comes to the hindmost one. ‘This is Sir James Stansfield’s winding sheet,’ she says. And then she laughs—and so I laugh, too, though I do not ken what for.”

And again there came the sound of childish mirth from the top of the kirkyard wall. Then, all suddenly, the little dark figure disappeared, and the sound of her laughter tinkled away irregularly into the distance, coming back to us, now clear, now faint, till it was heard no more. And looking through the bars of the kirk yett, we could see her flitting like a snowflake across the tombstones toward the vault of the Stansfields.

I think I never felt my bonnet lift upon my head more plainly than that night. Even the minister beside me was groaning and quaking.

“Who is this devil’s bairn?” he asked of Umphray Spurway. “I will have her indicted at the Presbytery for a witch.”

“Some chance bairn—the child of an evil mother,” said my grandfather.

“In my country of Yorkshire,” said Umphray Spurway dryly, “we would call her ‘God’s child.’ That is little Anna Mark!”

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT HOUSE OF NEW MILNS

THAT night they took me not back to my mother's house, which was the Lodge Yett cottage at the end of the avenue which leads to the south from the mansion house, my grandfather not wishing, for reasons of his own, to be then parted from me. But when we came right to the door of the Great House of New Milns, Sir James said to John Bell, the minister, "Sir, I would ask you to go down to the lodge and say to this lad's mother that he is to bide here this night, so that she may not expect him. Also bid Caleb Clinkaberry, her manservant, make all fast and keep his musket loaded. Tell him this apart. He will know the reason why."

Clearly the minister did not like his mission. Young as I was I could see that, for the place was lonely and the road dark. But he feared my grandfather, as I think now, because he was the patron of several good parishes, and he as yet a man both unbeneficed and expectant.

Then Sir James let himself in with a key which he took from a belt at his waist, and Umphray Spurway and I preceded him into the hall, a wide place where there were armour and old swords and a great brass-faced clock ticking composedly in a corner. A lamp stood ready lighted, and the place smelt habitable and homelike. It was good to be once more within walls, though even

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now I could not get the thought of the witch child among the tombstones out of my head.

My grandfather's old serving man, Robin Green, came to take his master's overcoat, letting Umphray Spurway and myself shift for ourselves.

"Her ladyship has gone to bed," he said; "she wearied waiting for you."

"Did she ken that I was at the change-house?" asked Sir James, a little anxiously, it seemed to me.

"I telled her leddyship that ye were ga'en wi' the minister to a meetin'. I condescended not on particulars either o' time or place, necessity not being laid upon me."

At this judicious answer Sir James was visibly relieved.

"I will not forget this, Robin," he said, making his wonted grimace of pain as the servitor eased his coat carefully over his rheumatic shoulder.

"There is a fire in your ain bedroom, nevertheless," said Robin; "her leddyship bade me say that she wished not to be disturbit."

At this Sir James clapped his hands suddenly together.

"Come ben, Umphray; come your ways ben!" he said heartily. "Robin, put a fire in the parlour—not her ladyship's parlour, but the other."

"There is a guid fire in the east room, sir," answered the old man gravely, as if saying his prayers; "I lichtit it as soon as her leddyship gaed up to her bed. Also I took ben the guardvine and——"

"Robin," said my grandfather with equal gravity, "your wages are raised a pound in the half-year."

"I thank ye kindly, sir," said the man, nodding with his usual simple gravity.

"Tak' that bairn with ye, Robin," added Sir James,

THE GREAT HOUSE OF NEW MILNS

his eye suddenly falling on me; "or, stay, let him have some supper in the parlour first, and then lay him in the Blue Room that is next to mine."

At these words, glad to be rid of my grandfather for a little, I went gladly with Robin to his pantry. It had the word "Stillroom" printed legibly on the door, and smelt of cheese. Here however Robin would not let me bide long, saying that it was cold and unfired; but putting a tumbler of milk and a liberal wedge of pastry upon a tray, he took my hand and led me back into the lighted parlour, which, like most of the rooms in the house of New Milns, had old pictured arras about the walls. The curtains were drawn close. The fire Robin Green had lighted was sparkling and "spelking" over the great iron dogs. Billets of birch were piled up high beside it, and Sir James sat tossing first one and then another upon the heap absent-mindedly, talking all the while to his friend the English cloth merchant.

As soon as Robin saw this he set down the tray on the stand, and going over to his master, he took the billet of wood out of his hand and led him back to the table. Sir James looked at the birch faggot, then at the hand on his arm. The old servitor was firm and respectful. So without intermitting his discourse for a moment, my grandfather permitted himself to be led back to the table and installed opposite the great oaken guardvine, which, with its silver-capped square Dutch bottles and shining ladles and rummers, looked most comfortable and appetising.

Then Robin Green went back to the hearth, and, stooping over the fire, he carefully removed the entire armful of faggots which Sir James had tossed on, blowing out each if it had caught, and laying it at the side, so that presently the whole room was full of the acrid bite

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of wood smoke, and the tears began to trickle down my cheeks into the milk I was drinking.

But Sir James continued his story without stopping to notice Robin Green, and as he talked the tears ran down his cheeks also, but whether from the pity of the tale he was telling or because of the wood-reek, I know not.

My grandfather had compounded a steaming glassful for his guest and then for himself, but so absorbed was he in his narrative that he quite forgot at the end of the operation to add the spirit to Umphray Spurway's glass—an omission which the Englishman immediately repaired without comment, reaching his hand for the decanter and pouring in the rich yellow liquid with a liberal hand, all the time looking Sir James in the eye and nodding at the proper places in the story, as if that were his sole concern.

My grandfather, after having bidden me haste and despatch my supper, because it was late and my mother would wish me in bed, presently forgot all about me, and proceeded with his argument. Still talking, he rose from his seat, and, going to one of the shelves which went about the deep window seat, he took from that which was readiest to his hand a little book covered in crimson leather, and with the pages grown yellow with age and handling.

"This," he said, holding it up, "is now my chief comfort. No, Master Spurway, it is not the Bible. Her ladyship—yes, certainly, she is a comfort, but of a mild nature, and, as one might say, occasional in action. But, sir, I would have you know that this is Burton, his 'Melancholy,' of the right edition, before he grew clumsy. *'At Oxford: Printed by John Litchfield and James Short for Henry Cripps; Anno Dom., 1621.'* By that you may know it. Without this written cordial

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I can neither live merry hour nor sleep quiet night. Having Burton's fellowship, even though my son strive after my death, I am enabled to go on merrily toward heaven, as indeed sayeth mine author."

Then Umphray Spurway, with a curious smile on his face, asked my grandfather if it became him as an elder of the kirk to pass his time with Burton, who, after all, was little better than a pagan (or at least an Episcopian), when he might be in meditation upon "Naphtali" or "Lex Rex"—or, if he minded not these, at the least casting up in his mind the points of Mr. John Bell's Sabbath sermon upon that most suitable passage in Canticles.

To which my grandfather replied that to his thinking there was more egg-meat in one page of honest Burton than in all the songs of Solomon the king.

At which saying my own heart was troubled, and even Umphray Spurway covered his face with his hand.

"Wait, Umphray," he went on, "only wait, my nimble bachelor, till you are a man with a family and know something about the matter. What comfort will you then find in a home that is one continual strife of tongues, your sons waiting for you without your gate, wishful for your death, their teeth bared to bite, your wife as peevish of face as she is bitter of speech?"

In answer to this outburst Umphray Spurway said no word, but held out his hand across the table, and he smiled no more covertly behind his palm. Sir James took it and held it hard in both of his.

"I will not make a stranger of you, Umphray," he said; "it is not debts that trouble me. You have put me out of the reach of that. It is that one of my sons hates me. Ye have heard his best word of me this night. My second, to whom I had thought to leave the bulk of my money, now almost every night comes home disguised

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in drink and rails upon me worse than the other. My wife cries out constantly that I have been well served for being so long over-lenient with the children."

"Speaking of your son Philip," said Umphray Spurway quietly, "have you tried all ways with him—the severe as well as the indulgent?"

"Aye," answered my grandfather hopelessly, "all ways. I sent him abroad to take service as a common soldier in the Scots Dutch regiments. I thought this would settle him. But in a month he was in prison; and when, through the influence of our ambassador at The Hague, I got him released, in another month I have news that he has been condemned to death at Trêves. Then, when I had provided money to bribe his jailers and bring him home, he only breaks out more and more furiously, so that I never know when I go down to mine own dining hall whether I will get the contents of a musket or a decent meal of meat into my wame!"

At this moment we heard a noise in the passageway, and both of the gentlemen rose to their feet, my grandfather pale and perturbed; Umphray Spurway with his hand again in his tail-coat pocket, where he had put his pistols.

But, after all, it was only the minister, Mr. John Bell, who came in hastily and sank into a chair, manifestly shaken and for the moment unable to speak.

"What is't? What is't?" said my grandfather, bending over him anxiously.

Umphray Spurway went to the door and looked down the passage. Then he came back and compounded a stout rummer of strong waters, the which, when the minister had sipped at awhile, the power of speech returned to him, so that he lifted up his hands to heaven and rolled his eyes.

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“Let the doors be barred, the windows looked to, for a man of blood goes about the house this night. Almost he had made an end of me, but mercifully his hand was withholden and I escaped like a bird out of the fowler’s snare.”

“Speak plain, man,” said my grandfather; “who or what molested you?”

The minister feebly waved a hand to intimate that he would speak more as strength was given him, and presently with many fallings away and applications to the rummer, he began to tell his tale.

“As I came back by the fir plantation, after leaving behind me the house of the lodge, where I had delivered your message faithfully, I came upon Philip Stansfield in the way with a drawn sword in his hand.

“‘Dog!’ cried he in a terrible voice, ‘down on your marrow bones, twice-accursed dog! Ye have mumbled too many indulgences. Ye shall have none from me. Tell me what ye did in my wife’s house at this time of night. Oh, no, lie not to me. That will not serve you. I know the way of your cloth with such precious female saints. Out with it, dog, or by the devil’s dice-box I will forthwith disembowel you with this sword!’

“So, seeing him thus urgent, to keep the peace I gat down on my knees and told him all.

“‘Bides Umphray Spurway at the Great House this night?’ he asked me.

“I told him that I knew not as to that, adding that I was a poor son of the kirk, and that I looked to him to spare my life.

“‘What moneys have ye cozened from the old greyhound this week?’ he cried. ‘Out with it! Empty your pockets!’

“I told him that I had not on me the value of one

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doit, but that he was welcome to my poor prayers. At this he laughed a most wicked ribald laugh. 'Poor prayers indeed,' he said, spurning me painfully with his foot; 'a coward's prayers are poor prayers indeed! Rise up, brave saint! Go to your patron and bid him prepare for a longish journey. My service also to the cloth weaver. My filial duty to my honoured father!'

"With that the young man laughed and went out of my sight, with the naked sword yet over his shoulder, and so, rising up, I ran hither so soon as the blood came back to my heart!"

"You hear, Umphray?" said Sir James, looking across at the Englishman.

"I will go seek Master Philip," said the man from the North Reding, taking out his pistols and bending them in his hand.

Still do I remember that procession down the long passage to the outer door, my grandfather leading the way with a candle in a great silver candlestick. Then came Umphray, the Englishman, his face grim and set, striding on with his heavy footfall. Behind him again were the minister and myself, fearful, I trow, to go, but still more fearful of being left behind in the parlour alone. I mind the shooting back of the bolts one by one, the whinging noise of the hinges, the widening of the black crack when the door opened, and the night looked in; above all I mind the expectation in my heart that I should see the face of a fiend look out of the blackness. Then I heard Umphray stride down the steps. My grandfather's candle shone a moment on a stretch of white glistening snow over which the wind moaned. Then the heavy door clanged, the bolts were shot, and Sir James turned and found me at his feet.

He gave a little start at sight of me.

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“ Philip,” he said in a strange tone, “ my boy Philip! ”

Then, with a long sigh, he added: “ And now he seeks my life.”

In a little he recalled his mind from the past in which it had been wandering.

“ You must to bed instantly,” he said; “ there is a fire in the Blue Room. It is next to mine, so you will not be feared to be alone. To-night you shall lodge there, and to-morrow—we will e’en send you back to your mother. Good night to you, Master Bell—this way, son Philip.”

CHAPTER IV

THE BLUE ROOM

I CAN yet remember the feelings of awe with which I looked about me when at last my grandfather had left me alone in the Blue Room of the Great House of New Milns.

He took the candles with him, lest I should set the place on fire. But he pointed to a pannier of faggots set by the side of the great andirons on the hearthstone.

“If you need light, put a stick on the fire, one and no more,” he said.

Then for the first time in his life he stooped and kissed me.

“The Lord our God be a sun and shield to you, little man!” he said very softly, as if to himself, and so went out.

It was with a strange quivering of the flesh and a creeping of the bones that I laid me down. There was no reason for it in the world, but certain it is that at the first glimpse I had conceived the strongest distaste of that quiet room caparisoned with blue, and with the same puff-cheeked hunter hunting the same wooden-antlered stag all about the walls.

I started to take off my clothes, but before I had gone far I stopped, listened, and then, hearing nothing but the rats behind the oak panellings, I ran to the bed in a fright, climbed up the broad flight of steps wide as at the front of a mansion, still all in a creeping tremor, and,

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making a dive for it, I hid me, head and all, deep in the clothes and coverlets.

Here I was almost smothered before I dared cautiously to put out my head again. The great bed in which I lay was like a tent. On either side, but much further off than I could reach with my hands, was a straight fall of blue hanging, lined with silk of a lighter hue, depending from the bar above, which was solid as a rafter. I looked, as it were, down a blue tunnel out upon the flicker of the fire and the reflections of the dancing flames on the dull oak of the doorway.

And as I lay there I can mind a strange feeling coming upon me. Perhaps it grew out of the terrible things I had seen that night ; perhaps out of the forlorn state of my mother and the fact that never before had I slept away from her side. But as I lay there in the blue uncertain lense of the firelight and listened to the thousand ticking noises in the wainscot, I seemed to grow conscious of something that had happened in that same chamber. The whole story became clear to me, yet I can swear that I had never heard it from any nurse or servant—nor, indeed, so much as known that there was a Blue Room in the great house of New Milns.

I thought I saw a young girl lying asleep in that same bed in which I couched. She lay on her side with her face turned, like mine, to the fireplace, and away from the window. For a while that was all I knew. Then through the multitude of the night noises I was conscious that with a long steady push the window-frame rose, rose, rose, till from the darkness without a man's head looked in. Well did I know that this was fantasy. Yet I dared not look or turn my head to certify myself.

Still (in my imagination) I saw the window rise till I could discern a man's leg, clothed in a tight stocking of

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silk, and above that baggy trunk-hose, thrown over the sill into the room. Then I saw, or rather knew, that the man had ducked his head under and was in the room.

Also I was aware—how I know not—that this was a foreigner, an Italian, to whom the young lady was married, but secretly, for fear of her father. And now this man desired to be revenged on her, because, following her father's will, she had cast him off. I could see the dreadful smile with which he advanced upon the bed. He did not come to the foot of the bed, but went and stood behind the arras toward the head; then I could hear his hand twitching at the hangings, and the bed itself moved a little—I suppose with my own trembling. My tongue clave to my mouth's roof. I desired to cry out, but could not.

Then—there came the twitching again. The hangings moved aside. The man's cruel face looked in, his bold black eyes sparkling like those of a demon. In his hand was a stiletto with which, I knew, he meant to stab the young lady to the heart. I saw him raise his hand till the point of the blade glittered beside his right ear.

And with a cry I awoke, as it seemed to me, in time to see in the blue flicker of the dying flame a dark figure flit behind the tapestry to the left of the fireplace.

My heart was beating so loudly and at the same time so thickly that its motion seemed to suffocate me. The bedclothes pressed like so much lead upon me, and every hair on my scalp stood bristling up with terrible fear.

Yet I knew that I must have been dreaming. For there, quietly dying out, was the fire; the faggots were all burned through in the middle and fallen down upon a little glowing heap, the ends still on the andirons and

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the flames flicking each other with a curious pulsation like the green streamers in a northern sky.

So I lay a long time quaking in my naked bed, the sweat pouring off me like rain, yet cold in my bones, as if I had been couching on a doorstep all that drear night of December.

I must have dozed, yet it was a troubled, unstable sleep, with many startings and much uneasiness. But over in the wastes of the winter morning, perhaps about three of the clock, I was startled broad awake by such a crying as I had never heard before, breaking the deep silence of the night.

It was a cry so wild, so strange, and so loud that for a time my reasonable soul was discomposed within me.

I could have sworn it came out of the room next mine, or even from immediately behind the arras where I had seen the dark figure vanish. But yet nothing more succeeded, and it seemed as if I must have heard the crying in my dreams. For the echoes of it lingered quivering in my ears as I sat up in bed, trembling, affrighted, and with all my night gear damp and chill about me as the frost and the outer blackness took hold on me.

There was, however, no repetition of the terrible shriek which had awakened me. But instead I grew conscious of a baffled snarling, inhuman, cruel as the grave; it seemed like the complaint of a demon from whom a stronger hath snatched a coveted prey.

I dared not rise. I dared not lie still. My whole spirits were dashed with untellable fear. Yet, being but a boy, I was more afraid of being alone than of anything else. I thought that if I could only clasp a hand I should be safe and happy.

So in the red loom of the dying fire, I rose, slipped on my shoes and jacket, and listened crouching by the

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door. I heard a moaning without which briefly and sobbingly stilled itself. Then came a whispering, a tramping, and what seemed like the scuffling of linen sheets unfolded fresh from the napery cupboard.

At first I thought the noise was the work of spirits, and my heart was dead within my breast with fear. But presently I heard one cough. And by that I knew those who were without for humans. I grew bold on the instant and feared them no more.

I desired to see them, to speak with them. Then I took it in my head that a gleam came uncertainly from behind the arras. The wall hanging indeed waved as if some one were shaking it, holding the edge in his hand, or perhaps more exactly as if a wind were blowing it about.

Yet even then I dared not move, for that terrible cry, the sound of which had awakened me, rang still in my ears. And I seemed to hear as it had been several persons struggling together confusedly, as if one strove to be through into my room to be at me, and another, stronger and kindlier, restrained him.

Whereat, with the childish instinct of hiding, I slipped behind the arras and prayed that they might not find me.

Scarcely had I been a moment behind the hanging when I saw a strange thing before me. At the very place where I had seen the dark figure vanish was an opening in the wainscot. A little wicket door, long and very narrow, stood half ajar, and a strong glow of light streamed in from the room adjacent.

I could now hear the voices plainly, and the human sound of them gave me courage. I stole forward and peeped round the swinging edge of the secret panel.

I looked into my grandfather's room, and there I, a

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trembling lad, little more than a bairn, saw that which might have blasted the reason of a grown man to behold.

For I saw the young man Philip Stansfield stand by the bedside of his father, coolly wiping the blade of a knife with a sheet of paper out of the book which my grandfather had ever used to keep on a little stand by his bed-head wherever he slept. It was called, as well I knew, "Richard Baxter, his Saint's Rest."

And at the back, with their feet upon a torn-down hanging, were two women, one of them busy handling my grandfather's body, while the other, with a crisp, hissing sound, unfolded fresh sheets for the bed out of a press in the wall. Sir James was dead—that I was sure of—though I had never before seen one dead. His eyes were open and stared steadfastly upward. His head wobbled from side to side on his breast as the woman shifted him from one arm to the other, busily enduing him with clean flannel night cleading.

This last was the fair-skinned woman whom I had seen earlier in the evening in James Brydson's change-house—Janet Mark, the wife of Saul Mark, was her name. The other I knew not by head mark, but divined from a certain similarity of look that she was a sister or crony of the first.

More than once Janet Mark called to Philip Stansfield to help her with the body; but he only swore at her and would not, going on unconcernedly tearing fresh leaves from the "Saint's Rest," and polishing at his knife, breathing on it and rubbing in corners.

At last he finished the blade to his satisfaction.

"Now," he said, "we will carry this carrion out and throw it in the river. Who hath done the deed, none can say. But if it be found we will cast the blame upon Umphray Spurway, and be ready to swear that he did

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it, because he could not pay the rent and mails due upon his mills."

So saying, Philip Stansfield took the body upon his back, and with the women going one before and one behind, he staggered out of the room and down the stairs, taking no care to walk lightly, but rather stumbling heavily like a man who carries on his back a sack of corn.

It was found afterward that he and his complices had locked and barred all in the house within their sleeping-chambers, being as it were fey and desperate, running heedlessly great risks, trusting to the darkness of the night and the fear of the folk within doors.

When the murderer (for so I thought him) had gone half-way down the steps he rested his burden at a landing, and I heard him say, "Janet, take the knife and go see if that deil's brat is asleep in the Blue Room. And if not, cut his throat!"

I stood petrified for a moment, as if I felt already the edge of the blade touch my flesh. Then with a sharp access of terror I turned and fled back into the Blue Room, shutting the panel after me and dragging the arras into place. I crept under the bedclothes and drew them about me in a heap.

The next moment I could hear the woman fumbling at the door. Then, finding it locked, she went into the apartment where I had seen them, and after many attempts found the spring of the panel, which she opened. I heard her feet steal toward me behind the hanging. I could not pray; I only lay still and shut my eyes.

The light of her candle flashed out of the dark like an illumination, lying hot and yellow upon the lids of my eyes. She crept to the bedside, and I could hear her stoop and listen. I smelt the smell of raw spirits in her

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breath. A lock of her loosened hair fell across my face and tickled it, so that perforce I had to raise my hand and rub my face. At this I thought I was done for. But it proved my salvation.

Either she considered me to be sound asleep or was averse to more bloodshed. However that may be, she retreated step by step to the arras and disappeared behind it, a white gleam of candlelight lingering at the crack of the door. I heard the panel click back, and lo ! I was again alone.

CHAPTER V

THE BODY ON THE ICE FLOE

I LAY on my bed and chattered as with deadly cold. And even then I could hear heavy footsteps come and go down the hall, and then the clang of a shut door. With that, terror, doubled and trebled, and a vehement hatred of that house of fear came over me. I knew not at what moment the murderers might return and kill me. My grandfather dead—my father the murderer. I minded how he had called me the heir for whose sake he had been thrust out of his heritage. Surely (I thought) he will come back and make an end of me also. I rose and threw my clothes about me, my fingers scarce able to grasp the buttons, being numb and without power. The window opened upward, and setting it to its limit, I looked out, and lo, on the thin sprinkling of snow I could see as it had been certain dark shapes dragging a heavy burden downward toward the river.

And again at this moment the faintness came over me, and I lay all abroad on the cold floor beneath the window, till, when I came to myself, I was almost frozen to death by reason of the stark rigours of the night, added to the fears natural to my tender age.

All this while, even in the depths of my swoond, the voices came up to me, now high, sharp, and quarrelsome, anon more laigh and fearsome, again like women laughing foolishly and without wit. And all over that house

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of New Milns there must have been those that heard, yet none ventured abroad to see the things which Satan wrought by means of his followers.

But my heart beginning to beat fast in my side, and sending (as I suppose) the blood to my feet and head, I determined that I would see what they did with my grandfather. I laid hold of the thick ivy branches without the window and scrambled down. It was a matter of eight or nine feet, and easy climbing.

Then, being once among the black trunks of the fir trees that grew thick between me and the river down in the valley, I began to lose fear. For action and the resolve of the heart to do something (it matters not what) are fine solvents of terror. I went stumbling and tripping, now headlong, now crabwise, on hands and knees, till I came within sight of Esk Water slipping along between its banks, an edging of foot-ice clinging to the shore grey-white, and the black water between dotted all over with little islands and tables of floating ice. For there had been a thaw up among the hills, and according to its wont, the ice came down to the sea in floating shreds and patches.

And as I went I approached nearer to the fiendish laughter, till it seemed to come from the farther side of a little plantation which hid the bridge from my view. The old bridge of New Milns was a one-arched, high-backed, narrow stone causeway thrown over the Esk a century or two before, being, indeed, one of the first bridges in that part of the country. When I saw it loom up through the trunks of the trees the thought came to me that if I could gain the centre of the archway before those who were carrying off my grandfather, I should be safe from all the powers of evil. For it is well known that even the fiends of hell cannot pass over running water. It is not permitted to them.

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So, running at full speed, I circumnavigated the noise, and as I went, keeping pretty high up in the woods upon a carpet of pine needles, I could see, as it were, with the tail of my eye, the forms of demons struggling beneath on the edge of the dark water.

I had not the presence of mind to think what it meant at the time, but it seemed to me that a taller fiend shaped like a man beat one in woman's form, who struggled and laughed and kicked, while yet a third held her by the arm. On the snow there lay a dark lump, which I knew to be the poor corpse of my grandfather, thus harried and tossed about by these veritable fiends of the pit.

I had reached the coping of the bridge whilst these dark shapes were still struggling beneath. I crossed to the further side, keeping in shelter of the little parapet. And then I felt more safe, for there was now running water between us. At the further side of the bridge were certain dark arches which had been half walled across when the bridge was built, and furnished with a fireplace and a chimney for poor wandering folk to lodge in—a kindly provision of a former age when the laws took cognizance of the indigent and the helpless as well as of the rich of the earth.

So, keeping well in the dark of the shadow, I slipped into one of these, and there, sheltered from the wind and a little more at my ease, I watched what the murderous wretches did on the further side.

At last, between beating and chiding, the laughter of the woman shape turned to most piteous wailing, as of a soul lost to the mercy of God. The weeping was that of a woman in deadly gripping pain, and it had so great an effect on me that out of sympathy, as it were, I whimpered like a dog. Help it I could not. Yet I kept the sound low for fear that they should hear me.

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Then, leaving the woman, the man-shape came to the edge of the water, and with a dark wand shaped like a shepherd's crook in his hand he drew inward towards him a cake of floating ice greater than the others. At first I feared that this was some cantrip by which they hoped to overpass the running water and come at me in my hiding-place. But presently I saw that they regarded me not, nor indeed knew that they were watched by mortal eye.

Then from my hiding-place I heard the leader rate the others who were in the shape of women, saying that now the job was done it behooved to finish it quickly and be gone. So at his word the two aided him to lift the dark heap from the ground and carry it painfully to the cake of ice, which he had anchored with his shepherd's crook in a little sheltered bay at the lower side of the bridge. Upon this, with infinite care, they laid the body. And then the black shape that had chidden the others set the shank of his crook to the edge of the cake of ice and "stelled" against it with all his might. I saw it turn slowly, like a wheel upon its axle. Then, with the black burden still upon it, pass sullenly out of my sight down the rush of Esk Water.

Then the company of demons (as in my phantasy I had come to think them) stood as it had been watching their strange ship and stranger cargo depart for another world. Thereafter I heard them clamber, crying and quarrelling as before, up the bank, and so disappear out of my sight.

How I reached the blue chamber where I had been left to sleep I know not. I remember nothing whatever of the journey back. Yet I must have found my way through the pine trees out of the dark plantation and

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clambered again up the frost-bitten ivy. For the poor slut who made the morning fires discovered me stiff and cold, lying within my chamber, the window open, my face all scratched and bleeding, and the coverlets lying hither and thither as I had thrown them when I leaped up in my haste.

By this time the morning had come richly up from the east. The horizon was rimmed with red and orange, while all the valley swam in a subtle haze, blue like turquoise. It was the Sabbath day, and folk were late astir, as is the Scottish custom.

The morning was so quiet that at first I thought my supper must have disagreed with me, and that I had dreamed or doted. The murder I had seen done, and all the adventure of the bridge and the demons now appeared unreal, till, looking out, I saw beneath me the trampled snow and felt the stiffness in all my limbs, and the cuts and bruises I had received when stumbling in the dark from tree to tree.

Yet for the life of me I could not find the panel through which I had looked into my grandfather's room. The wainscot was continuous, and the arras hung quiet and unstirred in the grey light of morning. Almost I believed that Sir James, whom in my dream I had seen so foully murdered, was asleep in the next room, and would presently come knocking at my chamber door and bidding me rise for family worship.

I went down the stairs, and till I reached the front door found nothing amiss, save certain wet patches upon the polished floor where snow had melted, as if brought in upon the boots of careless folk.

Desolate looked the wide promenade in front of the house, with its chill stone balustrades and the brown autumn leaves scattered about upon the thin snow. It

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was with a shudder that I passed down the avenue and through the gates toward the dwelling of Umphray Spurway at the mill-house by the river side.

And even as I did so a man came running at full speed towards the house, crying that they had found Sir James lying frozen in Esk Water, his head down and all the breath quite gone out of his body.

After this I had not proceeded far when I saw two stand in the highway, at sight of whom I stopped. It was Philip Stansfield and the minister, Mr. John Bell. I went over into the field, as if I had lost somewhat, and creeping cautiously along with intent to pass them, I heard by accident the matter of their discourse.

Philip Stansfield was wailing and lamenting to the minister that his poor father had of late gone quite distract in his mind.

"You yourself must have observed it," he said. "During the dark hours of last night he left his bed and is gone we know not where. A Highland dagger also is missing."

"You fear that Sir James hath done himself a mischief. Woe is me! It is but too probable. Even yestern he was bewailing his fate—and even blaming you, sir, as the source of all his miseries."

"Alas, yes," said Philip Stansfield, "my poor father was led to think so by that evil-hearted Englishman, Umphray Spurway, who is behindhand with his rent. And if aught hath happened to my father, I am sure that he is at the bottom of it. And by God's grace I will make him hang for it!"

"A proper enough sentiment," said the minister. "I like not Episcopalians and sectaries myself."

Then, making a little detour, I passed them, and, going a little way farther down in the bed of the river,

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I saw a little cloud of folk assembled, all most earnestly looking at something. I went down and mingled with them, but none took any notice of me. Nor was it likely. For there on its face, frozen in firmly on either side, and the tails of his thick blue coat dabbling dankly in the smooth black water of the pool, was the body of Sir James Stansfield.

Then one Andrew Grieve, that had been his baron bailie, went in and broke the ice, and with many hands to help drew him to shore, a most dismal sight to see. He would have chafed his master's fingers and drawn off his boots, but Philip Stansfield, coming up at the moment, bade him desist, urging that it was useless and wicked to strive against God.

Then, the place being near to the cloth mill, Umphray Spurway came out at the commotion, pulling his coat about his shoulders and buttoning his points like one who has not slept half enough.

At sight of him Philip Stansfield cried out, "There is the murderer of my father. Seize him! Seize him!"

And all turned to look at Umphray Spurway, who came elbowing his way through the throng and saying, "Now, then! Now, then!" after the wont of sturdy Yorkshiremen.

As soon as he saw the body he clapped down on his knees beside it, crying out, "My friend—my poor friend and benefactor—who hath done this thing?"

And the tears ran down his cheeks, for, though little given to show affection, this man loved my grandfather.

"Seize the murderer! Hold him!" cried Philip Stansfield. And at his word two of his faction, Saul Mark and George Johnson (called the "Devil's Tailor"), came forward to lay hands on him.

THE BODY ON THE ICE FLOE

But the great Englishman heaved himself up like a lion among jackals and such like.

His chin stuck out squarely with the red beard upon it, and his brown hair fell over his brow like the mane of a lion.

“Have any of you a word to say to me?” he cried in a great voice. And from before the mere wind of his uprising Saul Mark and the “Devil’s Tailor” fell back.

“Have you any word to say to me, Philip Stansfield?” he said again, turning on the young man.

“I proclaim this man my father’s murderer!” cried Philip Stansfield. “Seize him and take him to the Great House. There we will find means to make him speak the truth concerning this matter.”

And at his words there was a certain movement among those retainers of Sir James who stood near. Perhaps they thought that it might be as well to be friends with the heir now that the father was no more.

So led by Saul Mark and George Johnson, a second time they drew near to seize him.

“I think not,” Umphray Spurway cried aloud, and, drawing a whistle from his bosom, which he ever wore on a lanyard about his neck, he blew three shrill blasts upon it, as seamen are wont to do. And out of the mills and little low houses there issued a swarm of weavers, dyers, fullers, and all the workmen whom Umphray Spurway had brought with him from England. Every man had in his hand such weapons as he had made shift to snatch most readily.

“Now, sir,” said Umphray Spurway, “will you take me now?”

“The sheriff will take you soon enough, and hang you high for this cruel murder!” cried Philip Stansfield, frowning deeply to find himself thus baffled. “Take

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up the body of my father and bring it to his own chamber. God will discover the truth!"

"Aye, that He will!" cried Umphray Sparway, standing like a pillar of fire among his men, as the level sun of that winter morn touched his red beard.

And deep in my heart I thought, "And I will help Him."

CHAPTER VI

MURDER CRIETH FROM THE GROUND

AT the Great House of New Milns and in the feudal hamlet about it there were mighty confusion and deray. "Murder! murder!" That word of ugliest sound in all languages, was on every lip. Yet none knew of rights whom to blame for the deed, and many that were unfriendly glared at each other, hope and fell suspicion leaping eagerly up into their eyes.

Philip Stansfield and his party ran hither and thither, crying, "Death to Umphray Spurway!" Some blamed the minister, Mr. John Bell. A few even cried, "To the Lodge Yett!" ready to assert that the burden of the deed fell on my poor mother, because, her son being the heir (my father, Philip Stansfield, having been disinherited), she had the best reasons for wishing Sir James out of the way.

Indeed, for two or three hours the country-side was in such a taking that the most part hastily armed themselves, and every man looked askance at his neighbour.

Meantime the poor harried corpse lay on the very dining-table where he had made merry with his friends the night before, and Philip Stansfield had set one of his cronies at the door with a drawn sword in his hand, ordering him to cut down any that should attempt to go within.

It was Robin Green who first brought this word to Umphray Spurway at the Miln House, adding that my

LITTLE ANNA MARK

grandmother, the poor Lady Stansfield, had shut herself in her room and summoned to her the minister, Mr. John Bell, to hold a service. At first I was too much afraid of Philip Stansfield, my father, and overpressed with the horror of what I had seen in the Blue Room to reveal anything. But as soon as Umphray Spurway had taken me from the water-side and brought me to his own house, I came to myself and told him all I had seen, only begging him to keep it secret; for I was convinced that if I were called upon to witness publicly Philip Stansfield would certainly kill me.

The Englishman, who (as they all have) had in him a fine instinct of law-abiding, whistled softly while I was telling him my tale. He narrowed his eyes till the pupils became no more than darkly twinkling triangles in his broad rosy face. Then when he had asked a question or two he went to a little desk whereon were many papers and samples of cloth, and sweeping all aside with a full half-circle of his arm, he sat down and squared his elbows to write a letter. This being presently finished, he folded it up and sealed it carefully with his own seal. Then he called Robin Green to him.

"Take this letter immediately to Edinburgh," he said. "I will saddle you a horse out of my stable that will carry you easily and quickly thither. Go to the house of Mr. George Hume, cloth merchant in the Grass Market. He is great with my Lord Advocate."

"Sir," said Robin Green, "I will gladly go. But I am an old man and may not ride so expeditiously as one of the younger men in your employ—your 'prentice William Bowman, for example."

"Nay," said Spurway, "it will be fitter that you should go. Take what time you need. I will keep the castle here till my Lord send a commissary hither to

MURDER CRIETH FROM THE GROUND

make perquisition concerning the truth of this most foul murder."

"Sir," said Robin, "say no more. For my poor master's sake I would ride to London, let alone the little trail to Edinburgh. For thirty year he hath been a good master to me, and now when he is cruelly done to death he shall not go unavenged, if Robin Green's auld banes will haud thegether!"

"I will accompany you some part of the way," answered Umphray Spurway. "I desire not that Master Philip, who is lording it for the nonce up at the Great House, should take you with that letter in your possession. I will see you past the Lodge Yett in safety."

So saying, he blew upon his little silver pipe, for in the Wauk Mill by the Esk Water everything was done by so many blasts of the Englishman's whistle, just as it is upon a King's ship at sea. And scarcely had the shrill sound died away when the weavers poured out of their weaving sheds and wooden barracks, where they were resting, into the quadrangle, and there stood waiting their master in proper enough ranks and companies.

Umphray Spurway went out and said somewhat to them, the purport of which I could not hear. But he chose some thirty, whom he bade arm them with muskets, pistolets, and whingers out of an armoury which he kept in the drying-loft over the dye-house; because that in the unsettled state of the country the Englishman had drilled his retainers like a military command. For sometimes the rumour had run that the dragoons were coming to search the mills for rebellious hill folk, and sometimes that the wild Whigs were on the march to burn it down as an invention of the devil and a haunt of Episcopalians. So that Umphray Spurway reckoned to make himself safe in either case.

LITTLE ANNA MARK

Now, the heart of a boy is ever the same. In spite of the dreadful nature of my position and the dismal and affrighting experiences of the night, I was wholly consoled by the mere pleasure of walking in step with so strong and military-looking a company of men, all well-armed and able of body—if a trifle round-shouldered, as is indeed the wont of all weavers of cloth.

Moreover, we were going to my mother's house, and it pleased me to think that she should see me in such company, walking beside Umphray Spurway almost like a kind of lieutenant, aye, and taking as long strides as any one man in the ranks.

We were going through the croft at the back of the mansion house when we saw a little cloud of people come flocking out of the gateway of the Great House. They were all weaving in and out in a sort of turmoil, like children playing "tig" about a preaching in the open air. In the midst was a man in black, whom they were haling down the green croft. He had a rope about his neck, and when we came near we could see that it was Mr. John Bell, the minister who had been so high in favour with my grandfather.

Umphray Spurway ordered his men to halt behind some clumps of willows and gorse bushes that waved and fluttered along the water-side. Meantime the rout came clamorously towards us. There was a great fir tree a little way up the croft, perhaps a stone's throw or thereby from the bushes where we were hidden. The living cluster of men and women who surrounded Mr. Bell halted beneath it, and we could see that the poor minister still had the rope drawn about his neck so tight that he was half strangled.

"Up with him!" cried the voice of Philip Stansfield; "he has as good as confessed his guilt. We may not be

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able at once to put an end to his partner, the Englishman, but we will execute vengeance on this paltering rogue, who, as it were, was taken red-handed. Up the tree with you, Deil's Tailor, and throw the rope over a branch. I am a magistrate and I order you to do it!"

The poor minister stood silent, his lips moving, but not a sensible word coming from them. He seemed turned to stone, only his wild and glassy eyes wandering this way and that. Then Philip Stansfield read from a paper a sort of warrant for the "execution," of which I could only make out the words "art and part in the crime of cruelly slaying Sir James Stansfield, depriving him of his life and eke of his pocket-book, with sundry most valuable papers and moneys therein."

And ever as he read, he continually interrupted to tug at the noose which was round the neck of the poor dumb victim, crying out at each pull, "I will have his life, the black-hearted rogue!" Or again, "How like you that, murderer of my father?" And anon, "So will I serve Umphray Spurway, the Englishman, and all that in the past have crossed and harassed me!"

And all the tail that followed the young man cried out fawningly, "Aye, serve him so, Sir Philip!"

At this Umphray Spurway smiled grimly, but did not offer to move hand or foot to save the minister till the man called the Deil's Tailor had descended to the ground with the end of the rope in his hand.

"Make ready!" cried Philip Stansfield to his company, who at his word set their hands to the rope like so many hinds playing pranks at a hiring fair, laughing and jesting with a drunken jollity about the poor trembling, white-gilled minister, and telling him with what a plump he would find himself in another world.

"Now pray your best, Mr. Minister," said Philip

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Stansfield to Mr. Bell, "for by my faith as a gentleman in five minutes you will be in Abraham's bosom—and right sorry I am for the patriarch!"

Then he counted, "One, two, th——"

But Umphray Spurway was before him, stepping coolly into the midst of them.

"Surround them, men!" he cried at the pitch of his great voice, and at his words the thirty weavers came forth from their hiding-places with cocked muskets and drawn swords, to the great confusion of the half-drunken sots who had been so light-heartedly haling the minister to his death. Only Philip Stansfield himself stood his ground, for with all the half-maniacal fury he showed at this time no one denied him a sort of brute courage. He was indeed ever resolutely and even insolently ready to accept the consequences of his acts.

The rope that had been in the hands of his followers swung to and fro over the branch of the fir tree; and presently, as Mr. Bell sank on his knees to give thanks for his deliverance from his persecutors, it slipped and fell to the ground with the sound of a whip cracking.

"And now, sir, what means this farce?" said Umphray Spurway, looking sternly at the young man, whose face, usually bloated with drink and passion, was now of an unpleasantly mottled pallor, like freshly cooled potted meat.

"Nay," returned Philip Stansfield, braving it out, with his hand on his hip and his feathered bonnet cocked on his head, "were it not for your weavers I had served you the same. And I will yet see you swing each beside the other in the Grass Market, if not here. You two were the last seen with my father. You were drinking with him both in the change-house and in his own chamber. You were forth of your house all night, and there is

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evidence to prove that you were seen casting his body into the river at past twelve of the clock yestreen nigh to the old bridge of Esk."

The man's arrogant effrontery both amazed and dazed me, and I think that I was about to cry out in denial, but Umphray Spurway curtly bade me be silent.

"Well," he said, "for that which I have done I am ready and willing to answer, as you must also answer for your lawless deed in putting this minister in fear of his life without trial or colour of law."

"I am not answerable to a pock-pudding wabster!" said Sir Philip Stansfield, waving his hand contemptuously.

"No?" replied Spurway, dryly. "Then it were better for you to go and prepare the replies you will make to those to whom you *are* answerable; for doubtless a question or two will be asked about this night's work of more than one."

The young man did not deign to make any rejoinder, but turned on his heel, and strode away up the green croft towards the Great House of New Milns, of which he had taken complete possession, ordering all things within it from the first moment of his father's death, as if he were its undisputed master.

Umphray Spurway watched him go with the same grim smile on his face which it had worn ever since I had told him my tale. And somehow I knew as well as if he had said it that he was thinking how far Robin Green had ridden on his way towards the house of Mr. George Hume, merchant in the Edinburgh Grass Market, and particular intimate of my Lord Advocate, Sir James Dalrymple of Stair.

CHAPTER VII

THE TORCH-LIGHT FUNERAL

It was twelve of the clock on the night of the Sabbath, the day of the discovery of the murder, when, lying asleep in a trundle bed in the house of Umphray Spurway, I awoke with a mighty commotion without sounding in my ear. My mother was in the great bed near me. She had come from the Lodge Yett in the company of Umphray Spurway and his folk. For the Englishman judged it unsafe to leave her in that lonely and defenceless house, at the mercy of a wild beast run mad like her husband, Philip Stansfield. My mother would have stayed on at the Lodge, being, though a little woman, still brave enough in spirit in spite of having been broken down in health with her troubles. But both the minister and Mr. Spurway fleeced and prayed upon her to come away for my sake, urging intently that there was no saying of what iniquity her husband might not be guilty in his present state of anger and drunken fury.

So it was arranged that for a time she should come to the mill-house, which was situated so pleasantly by the weir whose water drives the great water-wheels. Umphray Spurway slept in a little box-like office in the mill itself, having given up his own chamber to the minister. My mother and I lay, as I have said, in the guest chamber. And I was never better pleased than to exchange the solemn-smelling, emptily resounding Great House and the lonely dank little Lodge Yett, hidden

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among the trees, for such an abiding-place. It was cheerful beyond words. All day long the hum and click of the shuttles never ceased. The creaking noise of many beams, all moving in unison, was music in my ears, gladsome as the sound of larks singing above a spring meadow.

Then at night there was the song of the river over the weir, and the splash of the water tumbling from the wooden mill-lade or trough into the black pool beneath the great wheel. I could never get enough of these things, and shall always connect the first perfect happiness of my life with the humming weaving-rooms and plashing waters about the Miln House of Umphray Spurway, the Englishman.

But at midnight a noise of stirring about the house woke me in the place where, though already a great fellow, I lay very well content—that is, in the little hollow among the bedclothes, with my mother beside me in her own bed. I know not very well why I awaked, if it were not that my mother put an arm out to assure herself of my presenee. For though a woman outraged and despised by the husband of her youth may lie and see the morning come in with unshut eye; or a high mystic (like Mr. James Wellwood of Tindergarth) may in like manner “wander all night sleepless upon the banks of Ulai, plucking an apple here and there,” yet a boy’s thoughts are not thus absorbed in the hours of repose. He will sleep through a cannonade or an earthquake. That is, for ordinary. But at all events my mother’s stirring easily awoke me, and a moment after I found myself on my feet looking out of the window. There was a dancing of lights down in the valley beyond the Esk Water, and distant voices, which came sougning irregularly up to us, being almost drowned by the plash and roar of the weir.

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But nearer—indeed, under my very window—I saw that which made me pull on my breeches with haste and diligence. Umphray Spurway was ordering his little force of weavers once more into marching array, and the minister, Mr. Bell, was standing ready as it were to accompany them.

I had not all my clothes rightly on when I ran downstairs, crying to my mother that I would not be long, and (to my present sorrow) disobeying her command to come quietly back to bed. For, indeed, I was never used to minding my mother much, nor she to insisting upon strict obedience. But so soon as Mr. Spurway saw me he ordered me back, and even so I must perforce have gone; for it was a different thing to disobey Umphray Spurway, and one that I for one would not have ventured upon. But recollecting himself, he said, speaking as if in a kind of muse, “It will do him good. His eye may yet long after the savour of the Sodom apple. Let him come and see how bitter it may be in the belly!”

And after that he took no more notice of me, but divided his party into two. One section he gave into the hand of William Bowman, bidding him keep watch at the Miln House and mount guard to preserve both my mother and the property of his master from harm during his absence.

And William Bowman obeyed, though I dare say he desired as greatly as I had to accompany us. Then Umphray Spurway waved a hand towards the window where my mother lay. For he was always more than ordinarily taken up about her, and if he had only to conduct her across a muddy road he took care of her as if she had been so much breakable glass that might fall asunder ere he could bring her to the further side. But this, at the time, I set down as an English custom, and

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resolved never to practise, observing that it drew the eyes of men, making them smile and wink to each other privately.

So we marched two by two down the little loaning, and, lo! like the rubbing of a wet palm over a school bairn's slate, the kindly glow of the watch-lights at the Miln House was blotted out, and the singing noise of the weir ceased as if a door had been shut between us and the downrush of the water.

"Philip, lad," said Umphray Spurway, "I have brought you out this night that ye may be witness to a strange transaction—one that ye will never forget, one that (rightly considered and thought on) will be a bog-gart to fright ye from evil-doing more than the devil and the Ten Commands."

We went down the water-side to the fords of Esk, marching silently. And as we went Mr. John Bell would have improved the occasion with sundry remarks upon the fate of sinners and the certainty with which their sins found them out, but Umphray Spurway (a little roughly, as I thought) bade him keep the wind in the bladder against the Sabbath day. To which the minister answered nothing. Anon we came to the ford across the Esk Water, and here it was no pleasant road we had to travel. For the floods were out, and what with the melting of the snows and the great pieces of ice floating by in the swirl of the shallows, it took the men some of them above the knee, and indeed to the waist, as often as they slipped from the stepping-stones. As for Mr. Bell, he was wet breast-high by falling from the great centre boulder, and, indeed, was well-nigh wholly swept away, the strength of the ford at that place warring against the stones. But while struggling thus in the water he had this expression: "Lord, I am

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about Thy work! I look to Thee to bring me safely through."

And it really seemed as if after that the waters slacked and became less impassable. As for me, I was neither wet nor weary, for Umphray Spurway caught me up on the verge of the black interspace and carried me right sicklerly on his shoulder to the other side, going as easily as if I had been no more than a pound weight avoirdupois.

Presently we were past the peril of the waters, and, the minister returning thanks, Umphray Spurway put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Sir, I humbly crave your pardon for my uncivil words. I spoke as a rude man, for which I am heartily sorry." And Mr. Bell answered that he cared no more about the matter; for which I thought the better of him.

But all this was soon forgot when we came to where the little town of Moreham lies low beneath the kirk thereof. For we saw lights dancing here and there—not lanthorns with dip candles in them alone, such as men use at the stables or maidens at the morning milking of the cows, but great torches of tar and rosin knots, making a red trail of fire above on the dark and cloudy sky. As we came nearer we heard also the crying of voices and the trampling of many shod feet. So we went fast, that those who had been wetted at the ford might take no hurt.

Then, as we proceeded at the swaying trot of the Irish harvester, we came on a man running as eagerly as ourselves, but in a contrary direction. Him Umphray Spurway called upon to halt, and, when he did not, tripped him up incontinent, being of a country where they are skilled in such ploys. Thereafter Spurway stelled the man up on his feet again and said to him, "Ah, William

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Robson, 'tis you! Whither away so fast, I pray you, at this hour of the morning? What goes forward with so great a concourse of folk in the kirk of Moreham?"

Then the man, being held fast on both sides and seeing no remedy, told us how Philip Stansfield had given orders for the burial of his father that night secretly in the kirk-yard of Moreham, which was more retired than that of New Milns, and in which also was the family burying-place of the Stansfields.

"For," cried the man, "he has gone about swearing that whether his father were murdered by the Englishman or whether he made away with himself, he died a dog's death and should be buried like a dog out of the house that was once his own!"

And so fiercely did the young man speak to all about him that no man dared to counter him by word or look. For, as William Robson testified, ever since the finding of his father, Philip Stansfield had been wild and disordered, threatening with death any that withstood him in the smallest trifle.

"Life—life," he would cry; "at long and last I am come into my heritage of new life. I, that was yester-eve as a lick-pot lackey and a whipped cur, am now become the master of all, and on the heads of them that flouted me I will clean the mire from my shoon!"

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"We will go down and see what is to be seen!" said Umphray Spurway. "Set William Robson in the midst, that he may not escape, and every man follow me quietly, as I bade you at first."

So, falling into the train, but yet keeping carefully in the dark behind, we followed the riotous concourse on its way up to the kirk of Moreham. I remember, as we mounted the slope, seeing the beard of the Englishman

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glow red as fire in the light of the tossing pitch-pine knots ahead of us.

Then, when they slowed to go up the final ascent, we passed behind the whin bushes, and, bending our heads, hid ourselves at the back of the kirk-dyke before they entered. And a gruesome sight it was that we looked upon from that coign of vantage.

Two women went first dancing and singing ribald songs incongruously mixed with psalm tunes. These had torches in their hands and would often stop to swear if one scattered tar on the other as they waved their fire-brands in the air. And more than once I thought that they would certainly fall like furies one on the other. The wilder of the two was that same buxom blowzilind Janet Mark whom I had seen at the change-house with Philip Stansfield. The other I knew not at that time.

Then came the corpse of my grandfather, white-sheeted and coffinless, borne upon the shoulders of half a dozen men, and looking, thus mishandled and abused, at least twice the length of an ordinary man. I mind, clear as the pen in my hand, that my poor grandfather's swathed head affrighted me more than all, for it was not stiff, but rather waggled this way and that from side to side like a twig with a broken top—a memory for a grown man to carry with him to his grave, let alone a halfling boy such as I was.

And a thousand times since when I have slept alone (nay, even now, after I have been in strange places for years and encountered many lamentable haps and mishaps) I could wish that I had never seen that grey unstable ball, which looked at me that night over the shoulder of the Deil's Tailor.

This unseemly procession came into the kirk-yard with levity and jest, stumbling over grave stones, the most

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part of the concourse being well touched with strong drink. The six bearers in especial went forward, kicking, cursing, and swearing, like men not in love with their work, who would have out their anger upon the very stones beneath their feet.

Presently they came to an open grave, where was a man still busily piling up the red earth along the sides, a lanthorn shining down from the grave-head upon his bare hairy arms and besweated brow. This opening was not made in the walled family vault of the Stansfields, but rather in the sunny corner where the poor folk lie, and this by special order of the dead man's son.

Philip Stansfield walked beside the body, not robustly and noisily like the others, but rather dull and sullen, like a devil from hell whose leave of absence is almost expired.

So when the two women stood near the grave, and with their feet detached some of the mould back again into the yawning deep, he turned upon them, condemning their souls to black perdition for ever and threatening to kill them, if they stood not where he had ordered them, without moving so much as a little finger. Then he bade the grave-digger, Saul Mark, to come out of the hole that he had made for a lazy good-for-nothing, swearing that it was deep enough for all it had to keep from the crows, and called to the six bearers to "cast in that carrion and be brisk."

But these men, ignorant cottiers and ditchers about the Great House, had yet hearts kindlier for the poor clay than their master. For very gently they lowered the miserable harried body till it rested on a bed of kindred soil.

But at the grave-foot Philip Stansfield stood silent with his arms folded, and at the head the two ill women

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spat upon the noble dead and cursed him with voices like to the croaking of ravens.

“Cover up!” cried Philip Stansfield abruptly, waving his hand to the bearers and to Saul Mark, the gravedigger. And they would have done it hastily, like men in fear of their lives, some with spades and shovels, some with nothing better than pieces of ancient coffin and lid-plates, and some with their naked hands; but at that moment Umphray Spurway stepped over the kirk-dyke and commanded them to stop.

“I charge you in the King’s name to mind what ye are about; for this is a hanging matter for all of you—to bury one concerning whose death there is grave suspicion of black murder having been committed.”

“What have ye to do with how I dispose of my father?” cried Philip Stansfield. “English dog, get to your kennel! Ye will hear enough of murder or all be bygone yet!”

“Like and very like,” said Umphray Spurway, composedly. “I speak not to you, Philip Stansfield; I know better. But I warn these men whom ye would lead into treason. Hear, Saul Mark, and you that are with him: I promise you I will make such a mutiny that the Parliament of the estates and the King’s high Majesty shall hear of it, if ye put away this man’s corpse without either fiscal’s examination or colour of crowner law!”

But at that the young man Philip Stansfield flashed a paper before his eyes with an insolent gesture.

“There—what think ye of that?” he cried. “There is an order from Sir James Dalrymple of Stair to bury the body immediately!”

Umphray Spurway took it and, calling for a lanthorn, perused it, looking well and long at the signature. But though he shook his head and doubted, he could make

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nothing of it, and so, much dashed in spirit and astonished, there remained nothing for us but to retire and betake ourselves homeward.

And as we went the two women laughed and waved their torches triumphantly over the grave which the bearers were now fast filling up under the direction of Saul Mark. But Philip Stansfield stood silent with folded arms at the grave's end, watching the clods smiting the face of the dead.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREY-EYED MAN

It was once more in the midmost deeps of the night. Two restless expectant days had come and gone, when a second time I was waked out of my first sleep by a knocking at our chamber door. My mother said in a pitiful voice that she desired to know who was there, whereto Umphray Spurway answered that he must have me with him as a witness to tell what I knew; for that a great man from Edinburgh had come to Moreham to make perquisition in to all the circumstances of the killing.

“Alas! when will all this cease and we live again in quiet?” said my mother, kissing me; “but take him. Only bring the lad back to me safe.”

“With my own life!” cried Umphray Spurway from without the door. “Be sure of it, madam.”

At this my mother rose and helped to array me, which I suffered gladly enough.

There was nothing but night alarms at this time, and though my heart beat, the turmoil and the strangeness made it all mightily taking to a boy of my age and dispositions.

At the stairs’ foot I found a party of four assembled, eagerly scrutinising a paper with the aid of a dark lantern.

Presently I gathered from their talk that this was an order from the Privy Council for raising and examining

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the body of Sir James. Further, that the one produced at the first burial by Philip had been forged. Three of the four were chirurgeons, or, as they soon after began to be called, surgeons.

The fourth was a man the like of whom for native dignity I had never seen, not of outstanding stature or greatly noticeable indeed, but of a quiet port and with such a pair of eyes—forth-looking eyes that seemed to bore holes when they fell upon anything. Then all of us went to Moreham Kirk, but not this time by the ford, there being, said the leader, no occasion for hurry. So we took a wide cast about, and passed over by Moreham Brig, under which I could see the black water flowing fast in the snow-bound narrows of the linn as we turned the corner, and so came in due time to the Kirk Yett.

Here, to my mingled trepidation and joy, were real King's soldiers keeping guard. I could see the star-shine glitter faint on their bayonets, no brighter at the brightest than print seen by the light of glow-worms, and the sight gave me a curious prideful feeling in my throat.

The grave in Poor Man's Aere was already empty, the loosely compacted earth being again turned up red, while a sentry stood over it, for what purpose I know not.

We were admitted to the kirk, and there upon the backs of three high trestles at the head end of the aisle lay the body upon a bier. Candles were standing about, fixed each in a dab of its own grease, on sconces set against the wall. A second guard of soldiers stood between the chirurgeons and the others who stood outside awaiting the event. I shivered as I watched, and the prideful feeling within me died utterly away. The men busied themselves with knives and vials about the body.

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The only sound was that of their feet and their low whispering one to the other.

It was fully an hour afterwards, and nigh the breaking of the morning, when one of the chirurgeons looked down and beckoned the grey-eyed man, who meantime had been busily and quietly looking over papers which he had brought with him, bound with bright-coloured tape into a neat sheaf.

He went immediately within the cordon. The chief chirurgeon whispered something in his ear. He held up his hand, and lo! at the signal an officer sprang along the aisle and was out of the door like a shot.

Then everyone waited more wearily than before, save and except the grey-eyed man, who again buried himself deep in his papers. The chirurgeons covered up the poor harried body, and I was glad of that. Thus dismally enough we waited, as I say, hearing nothing but the *dreep* of large mist drops as they formed on the leafless twigs and splashed irregularly on the roof, and the *whisp, whisp* of the doctors cleansing their horrid tools, breathing on them and looking at them close to the light.

Then all suddenly we heard on the kirk-brae the ordered tramp of feet coming nearer, and presently the rattle of arms grounded without. There was a hoarse bark of command, and Umphray Spurway opened the door at a sign from the quiet grey-eyed man. He simply looked up from his papers, nodded, and so dropped his head again to his task.

So there in the dim gloaming of the morning we saw a company of His Majesty's footguards standing at attention across the path, looking very spruce and brave in the grey light from the east. Another word of command and they separated, wheeling right and left with sudden

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clash of accoutrement, and lo! there between the open leaves of the door, with an armed soldier on either side of him, stood Philip Stansfield, my father.

Then in the little kirk of Moreham and within the walls of the harled masonry befell a scene to wring a heart of stone. There was no pitifulness of appeal about the expression or attitude of Philip Stansfield. He stood darkly silent, blackly handsome as ever, and, save that his complexion was mottled all over with patches of greyish white amid its tan, he looked such as I had seen him in the change-house.

But behind him were the two buxom women, Janet Mark and the other, whose name I did not know, their rosy cheeks turned ghastly white and the strong drink dead within them. Philip Stansfield stood forward and apart with a certain pridefulness, a black and bitter scorn lowering on his brow. But the two women kept weeping and bewailing their fate, wringing their hands and calling Heaven to witness that they were wholly innocent of all evil intent.

To the corners of Janet Mark's apron there clung a couple of children, the first being that little Anna whom we last saw on the kirk-yard wall at New Milns between us and the stars; at the other side was a boy a year or two younger. When first I cast eyes upon the bairn I got a start. He had exactly the face I was accustomed to see in the glass when I was set to comb my hair—the same broad brow, the same hooky nose, the black hair worn short and coming to a sort of widow's peak in front. When first I saw him I was in a fret that I might be allowed to play with him, but after a while I began to think that I might not like it so well.

Moreham Kirk, as I remember it that morning, was indeed a ghastly and unholy sight. The chill yellowish

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light was coming up reluctantly out of the east, and mingled with the blue river mists into a kind of unwholesome greenness, like that upon a dead man's face.

The candles on the little platform by the swathed corpse began to burn low, guttering in their sconces and dropping sideways unregarded. The white wrapping-sheets and the earth-stained mortcloths, the chirurgeons' abhorred instruments of probing and scission, above all the swathed formlessness on the bier—what wonder that I cried out and besought Umphray Spurway to take me away?

But the Englishman, on the contrary, put an arm about my neck and patted me on the shoulder, lifting me on a stool and assuring me that shortly I should be needed.

I wondered what it was they waited for in the growing light. Save the grey-eyed keen-faced man all in the kirk, chirurgeons and all, were blue with cold, many of them, indeed, shaking like leaves caught on gossamer cobwebs on an autumn morning. Then at a sign the two guardsmen who stood gripping Philip Stansfield by the wrists brought him quite to the front beside the face of the dead, and at the same moment the grey-eyed man turned into the precentor's desk with his papers in his hand—as I thought, just like a minister about to dispense the elements on Sacrament Sunday.

“I demand to know why I am brought here?” cried the prisoner in a deep voice; “you shall answer for this, whoever you may be. I would advise you that I know the law. Whatever be the charge against me, I cannot be tried here without summons or warrantice.”

“You are not to be tried,” said the man with the grey eyes, looking directly at the prisoner for the first time.

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“At whose instance, then, am I apprehended and held for examination?”

“That you will know soon enough.”

“I demand to know now. I see not here either Procurator Fiscal or Porteous Roll. If I am well advised only the next of kin to the dead or His Majesty’s Advocate in person can prosecute on a capital charge. I myself am next of kin——”

“And I have the honour to be His Majesty’s Advocate,” said the grey-eyed man, nodding over the black oak desk like an eagle upon a mountain peak before he launches himself upon the quarry in the vale.

At this the women set up a shrill cry of utmost fear; even Philip Stansfield started forward as if to break through his guards, and all in that little kirk could hear his teeth grind convulsively together. But in an instant he had completely recovered himself.

“I charge Umphray Spurway, cloth-weaver, and John Bell, minister, with the murder of my father, Sir James Stansfield,” he cried, turning him about to where we stood. “These two were the last seen in his company. They alone knew that on the day of the deed he carried a great sum about with him, being the rents and mails of all his New Milns property. They alone made him drunk in the change-house of James Brydson, as with mine own eyes I saw and can prove by many witnesses. Then, accompanying him home, they murdered him at his own fireside at dead of night and cast him into the river.”

The King’s Advocate, whom I now know to have been that far-renowned lawyer Sir James Dalrymple of Stair, listened to the young man’s harangue with his head a little to the side.

“Enough of this! You observe no probability or even

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uniformity in your accusations," he answered sharply. "I on my part charge you, Philip Stansfield, and these two women, your accomplices, as art and part in the cruel murder of your father, Sir James Stansfield of New Milns. And now I will proceed to make precognition with regard to the facts."

At this the two women set up a loud and desolate wailing, but, as before, Philip Stansfield grimly commanded himself, so that, villain as he was, I could not refuse him a certain admiration.

The Lord Advocate turned to the women.

"Be silent," he said. "I urge you to confess the truth as you value your lives. I do not call you guilty as this man is guilty. I offer you the chance to speak now."

"We are innocent—we ken nothing of the matter," they cried.

"Then," said the Advocate calmly, "there remains nothing for me to do, but to prove the deed out of the mouths of your own innocent children."

All this while he was making a new point to his pen, doing it with a small knife, delicately and well, so that I admired greatly to see his skill and dexterity.

At the first word of their children the two women set up a crying louder and more heart-rending than before.

"Cruel! cruel!" they said, "to gar our ain innocent bairns testify against us. They ken nothing."

Then there came a surprise upon me quick as a stroke from behind. I heard a name called, which at first I did not recognise as my own.

"I call upon Philip Stansfield the younger to stand forward."

It was the voice of the King's Advocate, and scarcely were the words uttered before Umphray Spurway pushed

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me up the aisle, and the guards making way, I came into the little open space where was a footstool on which I stood, and, forgetting all else in the kirk, looked tremblingly up at the grey-eyed man.

As he turned his countenance upon me his voice seemed to change and became extraordinarily caressing, and his eyes had such a light of kindliness in them that at that moment I could have told him anything he desired. And in this lay, they said, the secret of his power. He could wile the truth out of a reluctant witness with a voice caressing as that of a turtle dove.

"Little man," he said, speaking like one who has children of his own, "I want you to tell me all that took place after you were laid to sleep in the Blue Chamber of the house of New Milns."

I began to tell the story as well as I could, the Advocate prompting me with cunning questions. But at each answer the dark-faced man between the guards seemed to approach nearer to my back. Though my head was turned away from him I seemed to see the dagger in his hand, the very gleaming blade which I had seen him cleanse upon the page of "Baxter his Saint's Rest," in my grandfather's chamber.

"I cannot speak more unless that man is kept further away," I cried out; and at a sign from the Advocate they took him back to a place near the door, where the rest of the King's guards stood ranked in the order of their companies.

"Fear nothing, little man; you will never be molested for aught you may say here: tell all without fear," said my Lord Advocate, smiling encouragement down upon me.

So, with little catches of the breath and occasional forgettings of the simplest words, I told all that I had seen

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through the panel and afterwards by the Haunted Brig. And as I spoke my voice appeared to go sounding on and on eternally through a kind of tingling silence.

“You recognise this prisoner as the man whom you saw in the chamber of Sir James?”

I turned to look at Philip Stansfield. His eyes met mine with such a terrible look in them that my heart failed me completely. I fell to the floor and for a time knew no more.

When I came to myself the lad with the features like those I had seen in the mirror was taking his turn upon the footstool, and the Advocate was cross-questioning him with the same winning kindliness he had used to me.

“My name is Jamie Johnston,” he said, clasping his hands as if in prayer at the kirk. “I live with my mither. I was lying ’cross the foot of the bed in the kitchen on the nicht when the laird died at the big house. I heard my mither and Janet Mark come in late, and they cam’ ower to the bed to see if I was sleepin’. So I steekit my e’en and made pretence.

“Then, as I lay thus, I heard my mither say that ‘Ye-ken-Wha’ had dune the deed at last, and that he had a safe plan to affix the guilt on Umphray Spurway. To which Janet Mark answered that before the morrow’s morn Philip Stansfield would be lord o’ a’, from Moreham Kirk Yett to the High Stone Rig, and that she should be the ledly o’ it.

“‘Aye,’ said my mither, ‘and he promised ever to ride in the skirts o’ them that had scorned and lightlied him, and swore that they were to hac great rewards that helped him with the body to the water-side, so that it might appear that it had been cast in near by the dwelling of Umphray Spurway.’”

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As the lad spoke his mother did not cease to reproach him, saying that she had ever been kind to him, and that she never thought that he would thus swear away her life before the King's officers.

Whereat, greatly moved, the lad leaped from the stool and went and kneeled down before his mother, beseeching her to speak the truth and that the kind man in the desk would be forbearing with them all. But, being hardened, she struck at him with her clenched hand, and would have fallen upon him and beaten him on the spot but that the guards would not permit it.

Yet more piteous it was when little Anna, the daughter of the ill woman with the fair countenance, Janet Mark, was called on to stand on the stool. She had a soldier's red coat over her night apparel, the arms flapping loosely at her side, and a curly tangle of locks climbing over the high military collar and escaping in an intricate fleece down her back.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," said the minister aloud as she stood on the stool. But, as he spoke in his pulpit voice, nobody took any notice of him.

"Dinna hurt my mither, braw mannie," she cried before ever a question had been asked—great tears, as big as cherry stones, running fast down her face and falling like rain drops on the bosom of her thin night rail. "Oh, dinna vex my minnie. She has been a kind mither to me."

For the strange thing is that though the woman was such an evil wretch she had not been ill to the bairn who loved her, and that greatly.

"Do not be afraid," said my Lord Advocate kindly; "your mother's life shall not be taken because of you. Tell all you know. You may help your mother most by

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speaking the truth. Try and mind everything she said on the night when she came in late and your father, Saul Mark, spoke harshly to her."

Then in little piteous gulps of speech the bairn told her tale, how that she had waked with the noise of her father and mother quarrelling and calling each other ill names, although (poor little maiden!) that was no uncommon event in her house.

"My minnie said that faither was to cease his brawling, for that they would soon be rich if he but held his tongue. All was done, and well done, but not by her. . . . Then they spoke so low that I could not hear, but after that my minnie said that she would yet be a lady riding in her carriage, and I wondered if I would get sitting up beside the coachman. Then she told how 'Him-That-Did-It' guarded the door with drawn sword and bended pistol till she would bring back help to move the corpse, and that my father must come away that instant.

"Then my faither called her worse than before—'murderess,' 'traitor,' and other words, swearing more terribly than before that he would set no finger to such a ploy and that she might gang to the Ill Place her ain gate. So my minnie gaed awa' oot again, and I lay awake and shaking in my bed a' that nicht, saying mony prayers for my minnie."

At this Umphray Spurway would have spoken, but my Lord Advocate stopped him, and the next moment, with a shriek that rang through the kirk, Janet Mark cried out, "It is true! it is true! I confess. Take me away!" and so fell forward, doubled over the seat-back limp and soft, like a twisted sheet that is wrung out at a washing on the green.

Then the other woman cried out also, "My Lord, my

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Lord, say it is not unto death, and I too will confess all. Oh, say that it is not unto death!”

But the grey-eyed man in the precentor's desk only put his pen between his teeth, and, rising to his feet, began to bundle up his papers.

“Take them away; they are committed for trial!” he said briefly; but even as the soldiers shouldered their arms with a sharp, unanimous movement a thought seemed to strike him.

“First let the chief prisoner touch the body of the murdered man,” he said; “it is legal and customary, even if there be in it little efficacy.” And in a moment, hearing these words, the sullen scorn of the young man was broken up.

“I will not,” he cried; “ye shall not force me. I will not touch my father's body!” And he fought against his captors as they strove to take him up to where the body lay. It took other four strong men to bring him to the place, fighting every inch like a wildcat, his face like no face I have ever seen, distorted out of all recognition with passion and anger.

“I will not touch it! I will not touch it!” he cried.

Sir James Dalrymple stood grimly watching, almost with a smile on his thin lips.

“It is enough,” he said; “his behaviour speaks more loudly of his guilt than if blood had flowed from forty wounds at his touch. Take him away.”

The guard clashed out with their prisoners. In five ticks of the clock the little kirk was empty of all save the dead body of my grandfather, which at last was to be laid to its final rest without further disturbance. I could hear the crying of the women as Janet Mark turned to look back, to where on the highest part of the kirk-brae Umphray Spurway stood with little Anna

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Mark holding tightly to his hand; and I could see also the figure of Philip Stansfield, taller than any of his guards by a full head, cut black against the brightening sky of morn. And little Anna Mark had gotten over her fears and now smiled down at the Advocate.

“It is bonnie, sae bonnie,” she said. “See the coats of the soldiers—red, red just like mine. And look at the sparkling of their swords—bonnie, bonnie!” And she waved her hand prettily, as a child does to a pageant that passes below on the street with music and banners, while the soldiers marched her mother out of her sight.

But I think it brought the water to the eyes of all that saw it, to watch the mother looking back and ever back at her child, and the innocent bairn standing there smiling and becking and waving her little hand.

And even as we stood so the sun rose and it was the new day.

CHAPTER IX

MY TWO CURATORS

THE next part of the tale I will tell briefly as I may.

In the town of Edinburgh, Philip Stansfield, my father, was tried and condemned to death, according to the word of the King's Advocate. The two women with him, Janet Mark and Robina Johnston, were sentenced to be carried away overseas and there to be sold for slaves in the Virginia or Carolina plantations.

Now all these three lay in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh waiting their several dooms, and meanwhile many things happened to us who abode at New Milns, in the Vale of Moreham. For three or four days after the taking away of my father I felt all the sensations of terror as strongly as before, but after a while the feeling was blunted, and in a surprising degree I plucked up heart—especially so soon as I heard that Philip Stansfield was condemned to death, and would never come back to trouble us again, which, I take it, was a strange thing for a son to feel about his own father.

I was still abiding with my mother, no more, alas! in the pleasant Miln House by the river, but instead at the lonely little cottage of the Lodge Yett, sunk in the gloomy pines of Moreham Wood. I had hated it from the first, and now took every opportunity of slipping off to Umphray Spurway's mill in the valley, where I could be happy with the weavers and dyers, and with all the hum and bustle of the mill going blithesomely on about us.

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But after a while Umphray Spurway would not permit me to come so often.

"Is your mother left all alone in that gloomy house?" he would ask. And when I told him "Aye" he would frown and shake his head, and fold the webs of cloth all wrong; so that even William Bowman smiled covertly, and taking the piece out of his master's hands folded it himself.

"Fie on you! Go your ways home, laddie," he would say. "It is not meet that your mother, a young and fair lady, should be thus left alone. Pshaw!" And he would knock a drying-rack over with his foot, and then kick it again for falling; whereat very gravely William Bowman would pick it up and set the harmless thing in its place again, knowing his master's way and custom when troubled in spirit.

"Then why did you send my mother away from your house, Umphray Spurway?" I would say. "Why did you not ask her to stay altogether with you when she was here, if you think so much of her being lonesome in the Lodge Yett? I did not want to go away, and I am sure that she did not."

"What's that? What's that?" he would blatter out, looking as if he could have knocked my head off. "God's help! ask your mother to stay! What does the loon mean? Out o' my mill with you! Ask your mother to stay! Ah, would I not? The varlet, to speak so! Get home to your mother at a dog's trot, or I will set the bloodhounds on you. And see, take this basket of trout with you, sirrah, and do not dare to show your face at the Miln House for a month of Sundays!"

"Not to tell you how my mother liked the trout?" I would adventure, for I was beginning to know Umphray Spurway almost as well as William Bowman knew him, and to count upon that knowledge.

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“Well, at any rate let me not see your face before to-morrow,” he would grumble. “I will not have boys like you setting my carding and spinning lasses by the ears, and wasting my men’s time, for which I have to pay so dear. Get away!”

Yet for all that I went—just when I was ready.

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But I must hasten to tell what befell myself soon after this, while my father lay in the Tolbooth under sentence of death. I think I have not hitherto mentioned my Uncle John, save at second hand, as it were, when Sir James, my poor grandfather, complained to his friend that his other son, to whom he had looked to be some comfort to his old age, was fast following in the footsteps of his brother.

Now Mr. John Stansfield was a youth of quite different appearance from my father. For one thing he was very thin and wire-drawn, with a pale face, almost bloodless as it seemed, and his profile all pared down till it was like a bird’s, with a sallow skin drawn tightly over prominent cheek-bones, and a nose more than a little hooked.

He was a lawyer to his business, but not of the busy sort of them, like the grey-eyed King’s Advocate, Sir James Dalrymple of Stair. He had never had any work to do at his own proper business, but with others like him he spent most of his time in telling stories to the detriment of other people, notably of the more successful members of his own profession. So I found out afterwards, for at this time he weared but little of his leisure on a lad like me.

For years the brothers had hated each other cordially, my father with the prodigal’s contempt of the less open sinner, whom he called the “lawyer’s clerk” or “Blue

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Bags," with other gross and insulting names that I will not write here; while John said nothing to his brother, having a great dislike to blows and open warfare, remembering too, doubtless, the beatings and bullyings he had received from his senior in youth. So he said nothing, but only bode his time and supplied my grandfather with everything he could hear or invent to the discredit of his elder brother.

But after Philip Stansfield arrived home the last time from the Low Countries, and began to be a shame over all the country-side, there came a day when the brothers met. It was at Lucky Burton's hostel, in the Grass Market, where the North coaches stop.

Their greeting must have sounded strange as from brother to brother.

"Hey, Deil's Rattlebag, lang-nebbit Jock the Supplanter, whither away? Come and take a drink with an honest man for once in your worthless peevish life."

That was Philip Stansfield's salutation, cried from the further side of the wide square. And so, leaving his legal companions, John had gone to speak to his brother. From that time he scarcely left my father so long as he remained in Edinburgh. He had Philip Stansfield up at his own rooms. He plied him constantly with drink. He kept knives and pistols away from him when he waxed desperate in his cups. In all this he was assisted by one Saul Mark, the husband of the buxom besom Janet, whom we saw first at the change-house by the cross roads of New Milns.

Saul Mark was a strange man, rather shortish and thickset, his skin browned like that of a man long in hot countries, where fever and rum had salted him against all infection of other feebler diseases. He wore large silver rings in his ears, a thick hoop of the same

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metal on his left thumb for luck, and when he was in no company and away from a town he often wore a red handkerchief tied about his head instead of a decent blue Kilmarnock bonnet. And that last feared people more than anything, as being a spice piratical and murderous.

Saul Mark had appeared quite suddenly in the country-side one fair day about nine years ago. He set up a dicing and gambling table on the green at Moreham, to which all the young sparks and bold swearing blades within twenty miles resorted. From this time forth the silent swart man with the rings twinkling palely in his ears, had played many a day on Moreham Green with varying luck. One evening, however, there came an elderly labourer, elbowing his way among the lairds' sons, who put down a groat or two, which he saw swept off in a few moments in the quick give and take of a larger game. The amount of his loss was not much, but it was the elderly countryman's all. There seemed to him dishonesty in the sudden disappearance of his long-cherished pocket-keeping pieces.

With a spasm of sudden anger he set his hand on his hip to draw a dagger which he carried there, and grasping the keeper of the gambling table by the collar, he suddenly found himself looking into the grinning face of death. For with a readiness which seemed uncanny and unnatural to the onlookers, the brown man with the earrings had divined the intention of his assailant before he knew it himself, and while going on with his game had kept his hand upon the butt of a pistol which lay ready cocked in a drawer at his right hand.

The countryman gasped and gurgled inarticulately. A gluey foam gathered about his lips. He uttered no intelligible word, his mouth was too dry. He might

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have died there and then by the hand of the gamester had not a girl wailed suddenly from behind—

“Do not kill my faither! Spare my faither!”

The pistol was still steady at the man's head. The gambler's hand did not quiver as his dark beady eyes wandered once to the beauteous imploring face so near his elbow. Then with a sudden jerk he threw the man back from him, so that he measured his length on the ground. The assailant was Andrew Johnston, cottier at the farm of Bogle Thorn, and the girl was his youngest daughter, the same whom we now know as Janet Mark.

They were married in a week, and in a month's time Janet was back with her father, and her husband on his way to the seaport town of Abercairn with his cards and dice and painted tables. Then not for three years was there heard in the land the blithesome lilt of his sea songs, or the chanted refrain of his summons when he called customers to his table.

“The cairds, the cairds, the bonnie, bonnie picturs! Ombre, tric-trac and lanterloo—gleek and dice! Money to get, money to spend, money to burn! Come one, come all to the painted papers, the rattle of the pock-marked bones, and the merry clink of the silver coin.”

This was the man whom my uncle John had chosen to assist him in his purposes; but not from any feeling of revenge upon my father on account of his wife did he join with my uncle.

For Saul Mark, upon his return, had accepted the circumstances as he found them, sagely resolving to make the most out of them he could for his own advantage.

So it came about that my father being in prison, ready to meet his end, my uncle appeared at New Milns with a paper signed and sealed, bearing that Philip Stansfield the Younger being heir to all the properties and estates

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of his grandfather, my father, Philip Stansfield the Elder (being presently under sentence of death), had appointed his brother and Saul Mark joint curators of all the aforesaid infant's goods till he should be of age. "This to take effect only in case of the death of the said Philip Stansfield the Elder, presently in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh."

My mother was much troubled at this and grieved sore at it, as at first did my grandmother also, down by the Great House. But my uncle John soon reconciled her to it by accompanying her regularly to the kirk and especially by speaking ever praisefully of Mr. John Bell and his sermons.

But all these projects and purposes, overt and secret, were in a moment blown upon by certain startling occurrences which at once put a new face on all our lives. And these I will tell in order even as they happened, that the reader may follow their effect upon us, even as my mother and I experienced them in the Yett House of New Milns.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST NIGHT IN FEBRUARY

THE last night in February came upon us, a night ever memorable to all who had been affected by the sad death of Sir James Stansfield. It was the very day set apart for the execution of my father in Edinburgh, and we hoped for good news in the morning.

I had been over all day at the mills of Umphray Spurway, where, finding he could not prevent my coming about him, the Englishman had set William Bowman to give me lessons, together with the little tangle-haired maiden Anna Mark. It was work that William Bowman liked well enough; for not only was he a good scholar, but he was glad to be quit of the thankless task of superintending the workers in the mill for the best part of an afternoon.

Then, when it began to grow dark, Umphray Spurway would take me by the hand, and we went gladsomely together over to the little house among the pines where my mother dwelt. At first the Englishman talked easily and answered all my questions, of which, as is the wont of boys, I asked very many and of a very foolish sort. But as we neared the cottage of the Yett Umphray waxed silent, and when he replied at all his words were mostly at random.

It had already the promise of a wild night. Overhead the seud was riding eastward, flecked and sullen, yet going fast as spume on a raging tide-race. Lower

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a thin almost invisible mist steamed across the land and combed itself through the trees, like long blown maidens' hair. The reek of the lums rose from the hearthstone through the rafters up to the outer air, peeped once over the chimneys, and then with a sidelong dive sped eastward down the wind. Spite of all this it was not yet dark, and sometimes in the bright blinks the sun himself looked slantwise through the forest aisles and ruled the shadows of the tall trunks black upon the ruddy drifts of last year's leaves, and on the few half-melted wreaths of the winter snows. I did not notice these things at the time, but they come back to me now, as all the natural surroundings of my boyhood are wont to do, with a certain vivid and even startling clearness.

For about this time I used to be haunted with a fear lest I should forget, or rather, as it were, grow out of myself, and as the years went past become some other person. Why I was so anxious to keep my personality I know not. But so the case stood in my mind. For instance, I remember well a close fence of rudely split pine which extended from the back of the Great House of New Milns to the water-side of the Esk. It was, perhaps, four or five hundred feet in length, and the pales were set exceedingly close together. Yet I made it my business to know every several one of them by headmark, back and front—all the green mould on the split side, the bluish rotted places where the wet had seeped in, the clear yellow blobs of the resin running like tears down the bark. And know them I did, back and front, above and below. I could bind my own eyes and wander till I laid my hand on a paling, stop, cautiously uplift the corner of the handkerchief, observe my marks, and then run over to myself those on the next two or three on either side of me, these still unseen. In all this there was no

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apparent advantage to myself, or indeed hope of any. But the experiment may be accepted as typical of the many trials I made of my memory at that time. A year or two afterwards, having other things to think about, I cared no jot for all the split pine fences in the countryside.

Well, as I say, on this night I went skipping home to my mother by Umphray Spurway's side, propounding innumerable questions and not listening to one answer in twenty. During the latter half of the walk, however, question and answer were both mostly blown away by the wind, which disconcerted me nothing, for I was in high glee at bringing my mother so desirable a visitor.

When we came to the door of the Lodge Yett I knocked, and heard old Caleb Clinkaberry withdraw the bolts, clearing the rust from the holdfasts of the iron rods and his own throat of the roopy weather at the same time.

"Come thy ways, Master Phil; thy mother hath been in a rare takin' about thee! Eh, Measter Spurway! an' she will be glad to see thysen."

And so, hobbling forward with eager politeness, mixed with an under-grumble of complaint concerning his standing foe, that ancient "loombagus in the back," our old English servant led the way to where my mother was sitting, looking younger and prettier than ever I had seen her, in the room that looks to the west, down a kind of long alley cut out among the pines. The sunshine (or something else) was red on her cheek as she jumped up at sight of her guest, and letting all her embroidery stuff fall in a fluttering cloud she gave Umphray Spurway her hand, never looking at him nor saying a word save to scold me for being such a trouble as to bring the gentleman all the way hither on so cold a night.

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“Oh, he does not think that,” I said; “he was as anxious to come as a cat is to see her kittens.”

And after that I had all the talk to myself for some time.

Umphray Spurway sat down on a chair by the fire at my mother's invitation, and in turn he asked her not to make a stranger of him, but to go on with her embroidery work as before. And this, after a little blushful demur, she did. I can see her now. Her rose-leaf skin was bright as I had not seen it for long years. The flush of her youth seemed hardly yet lost. When she threaded her needle she would lift her soft sad eyes of blue a moment and nod at something I was saying, or, as it might be, smile up at Umphray Spurway in a manner which besought him to forgive the youthful folly of my speeches. For I mind on that occasion, as, indeed, mostly when Mr. Spurway came with me to see my mother about this time, I took the conversation in my own hands and conducted in person at least nine-tenths of it.

“Philip used to be a silent child,” said my mother once when a lull gave her a chance. “I used to call him in jest ‘the Graven Image’; for he would sit smiling in his little cot all day without a sound or a cry. Indeed, he never spoke a word till he was more than two years old. Then one day all suddenly he began to speak—and except when asleep or eating he has never rightly stopped since.”

“He and little Anna Mark are a fine pair,” said Umphray Spurway; “he is properly matched there. I can hear them half across the mill, and I cannot tell which is talking the faster or which cares least what the other is saying.”

“You have that child in the house with you?” said my mother. And I knew by her voice that she was less

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pleased than usual. The name seemed somehow to grate upon her—as indeed was small wonder.

“Yes,” said Umphray Spurway, bending forward a little eagerly and replying more to my mother’s tone than to her words. “Yes, she is a pretty bairn, and when she grows as biddable as she is clever I mistake much but she will prove a credit to me.”

My mother seemed to be deep in thought, pulling absent-mindedly at the thread and biting it off repeatedly without answering.

“It may be,” she said at last, musing upon his words, “it may be. God grant you are not deceived in her! But evil in the blood is hard to exorcise!”

“She is a rare good runner,” I said, interrupting them; “she can catch William Bowman with a hundred yards start.”

It was curious that when my mother and Umphray Spurway were together they gave much more earnest consideration to my foolish boyish speeches than either of them did when apart. So now Umphray Spurway smiled with a grave attention he never vouchsafed me at the mill, where, indeed, as like as not he would have cuffed me well for my interruption.

“Can she outrun you?” he asked. And my mother also seemed to hang upon my words.

“Only uphill,” I said. “I can match her on the level fields and beat her hollow at running down hill.”

I did not add that this last was owing to my legs being each half a foot longer than Anna’s. For why should a boy confess that a girl can beat him at anything?

So we sat and talked, and as I think forgot the time and place and all else. Meanwhile the wind grew wilder and wilder without, as it were rushing up the wide alley of the pines, collecting itself in the little open courtyard,

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and then flinging itself in fury upon the small panes of the window with the swift impetuosity of a tiger's leap.

Suddenly the night dropped like a curtain. But the fire only blazed the brighter on the hearth.

"Will you be pleased to draw in your chair, sir?" said my mother as a fiercer gust than before shook the window, rattled the door, hooted in the chimney, and then fled, laughing fiendishly, down the darkening aisles of the wood.

I saw my mother shiver and glance out of the window. The creaking and straining beeches and pines could be both seen and heard in the pauses of the furious gusts. Their stiff arms stood out like tall gaunt gallows-trees outside the window. She rose and moved to the cupboard.

"It is almost time to take our four-hours," she said. "It seems to come early to-night and to be more welcome than usual. It darkens apace. Will you be pleased to stay and drink a cup of tea? My brother the Guinea man brought me some after his last voyage. He got it for having rendered some service on his home-coming to a China ship."

"I thank you, madam," said Umphray Spurway, making my mother a courteous little bow. "I ought to be stirring, but I must needs wait for so great a pleasure."

Then my mother sent me upstairs for the West Indian sugar, which (just in case of accidents) she kept locked in the mahogany chest of drawers in her dressing-room. I went gladly, for such a chance came not often, and certainly was not to be missed. And as I stood by the curtain of the bedroom window, cleansing the stickiness from my fingers and wiping my mouth with the silken lining, I saw a dark figure pass from side to side of the

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wide west-looking alley, in which a certain reddish light yet lingered as if reluctant to depart altogether. But I thought nothing of this; for a servitor going to the Great House, or one of Mr. Spurway's weavers in search of a hare to boil the pot, was no unusual sight at the Lodge Yett.

I went down, and as I came near the door of the little parlour in which I had left Umphray Spurway and my mother I paused—for no reason at all connected with them, nor (God wot) with any idea of spying upon their converse, for espionage at least (whatever my other faults) was never any part of my nature.

I heard my mother say, "It is useless, Mr. Spurway. It is indeed most useless. I will not listen—no, I can never listen. Before all I have my duty to the boy; and surely this of all days is not the time to speak of such things. Think of him that once was my husband, and is so no more."

I could not hear what was said in reply by Umphray Spurway, though I am sure my mother was weeping. For at that moment I felt a hand close on the lobe of my right ear, and old Caleb Clinkaberry bore me triumphantly to the door of the parlour with a great piece of West India sugar in my mouth, which I could neither swallow not yet rid myself of, so high did he hold my head. He opened the door, crying, "See, madam, what I caught this fine young gentleman at!"

But that which we saw turned us to stone in the very doorway. My mother had dropped her broidery work and stood erect. Umphray Spurway was just letting go her hand, which he had been holding. But that was not the surprise and terror for me.

My eyes were drawn irresistibly to the window. It was one of the narrow and high French sort, opening

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in the middle, for the house had been built in King Charles's time, that it might be a summer pavilion for a former lady of New Milns. Now the lattice stood open, and the wind rushed howling triumphantly through the house, shutting every door with dreadful clanging of iron and the clatter and clink of falling glass and breaking crockery.

Framed in the blank blackness of the opening appeared a head, wild, dishevelled, hardly human, the throat bare, and the ragged collar of a coat far too wide sticking up beneath. It was my father, the man we had thought already hanged by the neck in the Grass Market of Edinburgh—Philip Stansfield the parricide! His eye glanced along the level tube of a pistol barrel.

“Traitor and traitress, I have you both; and now I will send you to hell together!” he cried with shattering distinctness; and so, without another word, fired.

With a little shrill cry my mother tottered, swayed, checked herself, and then softly sank back into Umphray Spurway's arms. Then, quick as thought, the face vanished from the window. The leaves clashed to. The Englishman gave my mother into the arms of Caleb Clinkaberry, and, without waiting to find his hat, he pulled a pistol from his pocket, looked at the priming, and rushed through the front door of my mother's house into the black night in pursuit of the double murderer.

CHAPTER XI

CALEB CLINKABERRY THE QUAKER

THOUGH to myself the remainder of the night on which Philip Stansfield shot my poor mother remains more or less a blotted and misty dream, yet I have heard so often what happened then told over by others, notably by Umphray Spurway and our own old Caleb Clinkaberry, that I know the order of events, as it were, by heart.

My mother lay on the bed to which Caleb had carried her, with her eyes closed, and I stood beside with white rags and liniments in my hands, gasping and swallowing in my throat at the sight of blood, while Caleb with a pair of scissors cut open my mother's bodice, so that in a little he found the wound in her right shoulder. Then I can recall hearing him murmur to himself (for all the world like a mother over a bairn), "Mary Digby, my little Mary, that I brought up by the hand ever since Sir Eubule did give you into my care—at Theobald's Inn it was, the hour before he died ! An ill chance—an evil star, a heathenish country—and the devil for an husband. Ah, my little Mary, that I who wert thy nurse, should live to see thy heart's blood flow."

But nevertheless he staunched the wound, and having done that which he could, he found my mother, with her senses restored, trying to sit up in bed, and asking in God's name what was the matter. And a great

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mercy it was that she minded nothing of the dreadful fact itself, nor yet of the face of her husband at the window.

And in this fashion we two sat all night, I quaking with fear lest the curtains that hid the barred lattice should again be parted or the door below burst open with a clank and the murderer rush upon us with a horrid cry. But Caleb had all safely barred and a musket loaded, toward which he looked often as he went about, muttering and shaking his head.

“For this will I yet stay his career. The bloody and evil man shall not live half his days !”

I must not forget to say that in his youth Caleb had been a follower of George Fox, being one of the folk called Quakers—only he said but little about it. For they were a people of little esteem in Scotland. Yet now, when Caleb’s “darling maid,” as he called my mother, was touched, lo, he who had preached peace so long turned out as great a man of war as the best of them.

So we sat, and for my part I quaked every time that a rat ran rumbling from garret to cellar, which they did all night, or even a mouse scratched fitfully in the wainscot. Then my mother, growing heated and feverish with her green wound, rambled on about Clieveden and Marlow, with many names and places pleasant-sounding, but to me unknown. And Caleb, as he bent over and put a taste of water mixed with elder-flower wine to her lips, murmured, “Yes, my pretty, and so thou shalt ! To Marlow thou shalt go with old Caleb, and gather water-lilies yellow and water-lilies white !”

“I love the white best,” she said, smiling a little, and looking so young-like out of her eyes, that for the moment she seemed scarce older than I. Nor was she, for my mother had again become Mary Digby, the

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Squire's little maid out of Great Marlow, and was pulling flowers in the fair woods of Clieveden as she had done more than twenty years ago.

But of Umphray Spurway no word or sign or remembrance. I doubt if either of the others ever thought of him all that night, though he had gone out into the dark to face the terrible man who was our bane. But I could see him lying in a forest glade and my father bending over him with the knife I had seen wiped clean on the leaf of "Baxter his Saint's Rest," and that dreadful smile on his face. I shuddered as I thought on it.

Yet in spite of all, in spite of the house of the Lodge with its thousand creaking noises, the moan and whimper of the wind in the chimneys, and the brushing sound it made out among the tossing trees, I dozed, waking by starts to find the lamplight still falling on Caleb, his unsleeping eyes watching my mother in shadow, turning rapidly to and fro on her bed, and muttering to herself of old days and people of whom I had never heard.

Such scraps as these would come to me as from another world.

"Good Gaffer Noddycap, let me go in here out of the rain. Goody will give me a seat by the hearth till it overpass. And here I declare is young Will Lucy! What can bring him hither at this time of day? How do you do, sir? I am infinitely surprised to see you, sir."

Then would old Caleb throw out his hand and uplift his eyes to the ceiling.

"God help us," he muttered, "she is again all agog on Squire Lucy's Master Will. Dead—dead, these sixteen year. He died fighting the Dutch the year his father sent him to sea because he was growing overfond of our little Mary."

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Again I would doze off, and when I waked it would go something like this : “I will not marry him. I hate him. Be not cruel ! If I must, I must. Mother, do not send me away alone with that man !”

And then for the first time in life there came across me with a jarred and impotent grating pain the gust of a woman’s unrestrained weeping. “I will go—yes, mother, I will go. But oh, I cannot forget him. God in heaven help me !”

And then would Caleb bend over and touch her cheek gently with his fingertips, murmuring little loving tendernesses in her ear, presently turning away with gloomy countenance to mutter great anathemas. “Accursed—three times accursed shall he be that hath so spoiled our fair vine—our dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the rock. This day is the pride of Caleb Clinkaberry brought low. Ah, the mourning of Rachel, the weeping of Jazer, and the lamentation of Sibmah, clad with vines !”

Then, as the sobbing grew slower, he would turn again to the bed, and speaking in a gentle voice would say, “Sweet Mary, hush thee. The Lord is good. All will yet be well. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever !”

And then again would he betake himself to the cursing of Philip Stansfield as soon as she had fallen into a soothing doze. Caleb spoke ever in a hoarse repressed whisper, but I heard him well enough from the great chair by the dead fire where I sat and nodded, now asleep and now awake.

The very last memory I have of this terrible night of February the twenty-ninth (being leap year) is that of waking to see Caleb Clinkaberry, the palms of his hands pressed together and his eyes lifted up, saying

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softly, “*Desolation and destruction and famine and sword! The fury of the Lord is upon us, the rebuke of our God!*”

When I awoke the new day had come, and I was conscious of a certain ghastly feeling of discomfort and a horror of myself, almost like that which comes with the beginnings of fever. I did not know that this arrives to all who sleep in their clothes for the first time. It was light, and I saw a man by my mother’s bedside. A woman was on the other side, both busied with matters that I could not see.

They had not observed me, shrunk up in the corner of the black oaken settle. But at a slight groan from the bed I sprang up and cried, “Let my mother alone! I will kill you if you lay hand on my mother!”

The man who was stooping over the bed half turned and saw me ready to fly like a bantam cock at him. He did not remove his hands, or disengage himself from what he was doing. But instead he lifted his voice over his shoulder, and said, in a quick rasping tone, “Umphray Spurway, take this boy away, and keep him away!”

Then I knew that he was the surgeon from Abercain who had come to the Miln House when the plague broke out among the weavers—a skilful but an arrogant man. Then came Umphray Spurway in, looking bleached and grey, the light failed out of his eyes, and the colour faded from his hair and beard—or so at least it seemed to me.

But though I was main glad to see him, he pulled me roughly away and railed upon me for crying out at such a moment, being jangled in his speech, and ever with an ear on the door of the room where my mother was.

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Then in a little, being come to myself, and the feeling that my clothes were made of hay having a little died away, I would have asked him concerning his by-gone night adventures, but having, as it were, his whole reasonable soul in the further room, he bade me hush, and presently gave me a great cuff, whereat I sulked. Also he kept tight hold on my collar as if I were intent to run back again, of which I had no intention.

Then after a while the surgeon came out with a changed and smiling countenance, and said, "It is out and all is well!" holding up at the same time a little round bullet, at sight of which the great red Englishman turned very white and faint, and cried, "Take it away, man. God's sake, take it out of my sight!"

This I thought strange in a man so brave and strong, whom I had seen adventure upon such a desperate chance that very night.

It was the best part of an hour before they would let me go in to see my mother. The nurse, one Margit Fergus, a wise woman, stood at the bed's head with some liquid in a glass dish, with which she continually moistened my poor mother's lips. The surgeon was gone, of which I was glad. Then I took Umphray Spurway's hand and would have made him come with me; but he would not, shaking me off harshly and striding out of the house with his brows bent and such a look of sadness between his brows as I had never till then seen on any man's countenance.

My dear mother smiled up at me with so sweet and peaceful an expression that I fell to the weeping, not knowing that that is the face which in women denotes peace and the overcoming of suffering.

Margit Fergus would not permit me to bide long, nor

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to ask any questions ; but I kissed my mother's brow, which was chill and damp. So I was glad to go out, and at the door there was waiting for me Umphray Spurway with little Anna Mark in his hand.

"How looked she?" he asked gruffly, without so much as lifting his brows or glancing at me.

"She did very well," I replied, "and smiled when I kissed her. She is asleep now."

He had a paper in his hand and he read it softly over to himself. "For a green wound a plaister compounded of frankincense, literge, roots of lilies, rose leaves, with the bran of beans ground fine."

Then he turned to me.

"Boy," he said, "hath your mother an herb cupboard or such-like?"

"Nay," I answered readily, "but my grandmother hath a fine one at the Great House!"

At this he began to wax visibly uneasy, and kept pulling out his great round silver watch, and looking toward the Miln House.

"If William Bowman comes not soon I will tan his hide for him, great hulking good-for-nothing that he is!"

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when his 'prentice and familiar came up with some twenty of the trained band of weavers. These Umphray Spurway placed about the Lodge House, bidding so many abide in the little coach-house at the back, where the hens laid in nests of soft twisted bent grass, and the others to stand sentry at equal distances through the wood.

Then he set off by himself at a good round pace to the Great House—as I presumed to get the herbs for my mother's plaister. I ran alongside and asked him if he had killed my father, hoping that he had.

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“No,” he said. “I pursued after him for two hours, and saw nothing. But once I heard him laugh very near me in the darkness.”

“Were you not afraid?” said I, with a certain dogged and perverted pride in so formidable a relative.

“Yes,” he growled, “I was naturally afraid—that I would not find him!”

Then he ordered me back to the Yett House, as he would have ordered a dog. For never was a man more changed than Umphray Spurway about this time. He cared nothing for his looms or his work. Half his men were constantly about our house in the woods, and as for the others—why, they did just what work they willed to do.

And every night till they removed my mother to the Great House and afterwards to Abercairn, Umphray Spurway would take a sword and pistol a little before the hour of dusk and go out into the darkening woods like a hunter who goes on a long hunt.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT ENGLISH DROVING

BUT of Philip Stansfield, the murderer of his father, the almost assassin of his wife, nor hilt nor hair was seen in all the country-side. Bands of men went, twenty together, scouring the wild places, beating the woods, quartering the muirs with bloodhounds and scent-dogs. All was in vain. Not a footprint, not so much as a shred of clothing on a thorn. Only some few of the searchers would come back whispering under their breath of a mocking laugh which they had heard (or thought they heard). Mostly it seemed to hang about the skirts of the party as the night came on and they turned wearily homeward. But it might have been no more than a blinking cue-owl searching for field-mice in the early twilight.

Only those who have known what it is to have a red-hand murderer at large in their very neighbourhood, can conceive the agony of fear that seized on the whole country-side of New Miln and Moreham. Umphray Spurway was the one man who kept his head, and even he shrank into himself, his fine robust body waxing thin, and his rosy cheeks falling slack and wrinkled.

It was curious that though the cause of all this panic was the man who gave me being, I felt no interest in the affair, save that I hoped they would soon catch and hang him. But I enjoyed the mounting of the guards, the pass-words, the glancing musket-barrels of the brave

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weavers, and above all the red coats of the soldiers whom the Government sent from Edinburgh to seize the murderer.

Every morning a new tale ran from lip to lip. Every evening a fresh alarm circulated from gable window to gable window. Women shrieked and fainted. Several children appeared untimeously in the world. A carrier was found clubbed, his cart and pockets rifled, on the Edinburgh high road, within a mile of the city lights. Every family in the country put up fresh bolts and bars. Poor folk barricaded their doors with heavy furniture, and filled up their windows at nightfall with slabs of whinstone from the nearest rock-face.

At last they took my mother away in a litter, borne on the shoulders of men all the fifteen miles of the plain road to the town of Abercairn, where there was a new hospital equipped with physicians of great skill. I was not permitted to go with the party, which in the first instance consisted of Umphray Spurway's weavers, with himself walking on one side of the litter and Caleb Clinkaberry on the other. The old Quaker refused to be separated from his "little maid" even for a moment, and so fierce were his denunciations of woe and desolation upon all who withstood him, that he gained his point.

So I was left at the Miln House with little Anna Mark, under the governance and restraint of William Bowman, which was just as good as none at all.

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And then it was that I first knew how much pleasanter it is to be friends with a girl than with a boy. Never before had I known any save of my own sex. I loved my mother in the way in which all boys love their mothers—that is, I made her a very poor and perfunc-

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tory return for all the wealth of love she had weared on me during my years of infancy. Nevertheless I loved her.

Besides her I had never seen any good in womankind. I was fond of Umphray Spurway, and on this point I shared his prejudices. For save my mother (who of course did not count, being my mother), the Yorkshireman would never consent to have one of the breed within the Miln House. He had perforce to employ them in the fine work of the mill, but ever under protest. They were his bane, the ill drop in his cup, the fly in his ointment—with other things that I mind not now. He had a full stock of odious comparatives for them.

But, as to little Anna Mark, in short while I had proved to myself that she was a very different story. For one thing, even Umphray Spurway thought her different. For he, who admitted none of her sex, had taken Anna into his house. Then, again, I liked to play with her and to walk hand-in-hand with her. Now I never did this, willingly or unwillingly, with my grandmother, who was wont to extract a catechism out of her pocket and set me to learn proofs of doctrines if she found me idle. But Anna Mark was guiltless even of “the Creed,” and as to the scriptural proofs of that noblest of all summations of human destiny: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever”—why, little Anna simply did not know that the thing required to be proven.

I wonder if I can convey any idea of what little Anna Mark was then, when I first knew her in the mill-house by the Esk Water.

“The Witch-Child,” the ill-affected called her, and indeed there was always something not quite of this world about her. She had a far-off look of her gipsy father, Saul Mark, nothing whatever of her mother ex-

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cept her dazzling teeth. All else was her own—no child in the village or among the weaver-lasses at the Miln cottages in the least to be compared to her. She was slender and tall for her age, quick and lithe in every movement as a wild thing of the woods. Her eyes would follow any one with whom she was not well acquainted with the lightning suspicion of a caged squirrel. This shy wild-wood look afterwards left her, the bright glancing of her eyes never.

Her hair, as I have said, ran in a ripple of brown crisps and curls over her shoulders and down her back. But, even as a child, she had a fashion of her own of packing it on the top of her head out of the way when tree-climbing or any childish scheme requiring agility was on hand.

Now I, Philip Stansfield the younger, thought well of myself then as now. Whatever I did I tried hard to do better than any one else. And yet I admit that there was nothing—running, climbing, jumping, standing on one's head, on one's hands, making faces, fighting with fists, shooting at a mark with the bow and arrow, playing at quoits, tops, marbles, tic-tac-toe, jacks, knuckle-bones—it was all the same; I might be good at them—but Anna Mark was better.

For a while I had the better in learning, but day by day she overhauled me, spurred on with the ambition of beating me. The "Books of the Old and New Testaments" were a stronghold for a long while, because she did not see the necessity for getting them by heart. But one morning she puzzled me with Ecclesiastes, and then when she went on to offer the books of the Apocrypha, either forth or back just as I liked, I rose in wrath and called her a Papist, which was the direst term of reproach known to me.

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"Papist or no," she answered back, "I can beat you at the books of the Bible."

I did not care, of course, even if the allegation had been true.

For a boy, being manifestly superior in all points to a girl, does not need to make good his superiority in particular instances.

I had, however, one stronghold that could not be assailed. Anna Mark could not throw a stone as well as I—this not for want of trying. I remember that once I came on her weeping at a dyke-back, and upon my asking what the matter was, she sobbed out, "I have tried to throw stones like you, till my arm is near broke with trying—and I cannot do it a bit better!"

"Never mind," I said, as kindly as I could, for I hated to see her cry, "we will try a race to the end of the mill-lade, and you can beat me at that!"

"I don't care for running. I wanted to beat you at stone-throwing!" she sobbed.

Yet there came a time when I had a surprise sprung upon me. It was on the day when Umphray Spurway brought home his "winter beasts." These were rough and shaggy Highland cattle from the great droves, which with a rabble army of retainers passed every year southward into England. They went south mostly about the end of harvest, whether the year proved early or late. The lowland farmers bought them, fattened them on the aftermath of the hay, and on the stubbles of the corn—presently turning them out on the moors till the snow came, and then killing, salting, and setting them apart as "marts" for winter consumpt.

Umphray Spurway bought many of these, for being an Englishman he loved flesh-meat, and believed that

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his weaver-folk worked better on it than on porridge three times a day.

So this buying of the "mart" cattle was a great event with us, and as my mother, though recovered of her wound, and now lodging in her own hired house in Abercairn, was still weak, I remained (to my joy) at the Miln House. I had looked forward to the English Droving as one great opportunity of proving my superiority to little Anna Mark. And to this day I can remember the shame merging into a kind of reluctant admiration mingled with hopelessness with which I viewed her performances. For some months, indeed, she had made frequent absences from home during the afternoons, and this without giving any explanation as to where she had been, though I pleaded hard to know.

Upon the great day we went out as soon as it was light, to choose and bring home our bunch of wild rebellious Highland cattle. It was to the "Tinklers' Slap" that we went, a desolate place among the hills to the west, through which the drove road picked a perilous passage, and Umphray took with him a score of his armed weavers. For he carried money, and the cattle dealers were quite as wild as the cattle they brought with them. At least it was as well to err on the safe side.

We marched merrily and fast, yet not so fast but that Anna and I played about the company, running round and round them, like the collie dogs themselves, gripping, grappling, and rolling over each other, just as they did, while Umphray watched us indulgently and yet carefully, lest I should hurt the girl.

So little did he know! He ought rather to have been careful that she did me no harm. For a greater little tiger-cat never was.

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And now I come to my surprise.

For as Umphray Spurway, with his hand on his pistol hilt, chose out, and paid for each wild steer or fleck-mouthed bull, it was the duty of his party to meet the beast as it was scourged from the drove by the half-naked kerns of the hills who swarmed all around. Then having put a distance between the chosen and his companions, the aim of us all was to head him away to the eastward, so that he might not double and rejoin the herd by speed of foot. This was usually accomplished by stones and goads, the men using goads and the scampish light infantry pebbles and sticks.

It was wild work at times, indeed at most times.

For the 'Tinklers' Slap is a deep defile which leads into the heart of the hills. High above the screes bend their black brows to look over. Bell-heather and bent delicately diversify the middle slopes. All the bottom is smooth and green, save where, in a tunnel of bracken and Queen-of-the-Meadow, a certain trickle of a streamlet gurgles and lisps in an emerant gloom.

But upon this noble morning of late September the 'Tinklers' Slap looked not thus, still and lovely, with only an eagle soaring above it lost in the blueness of the sky. Down it surged a vast horn-tossing herd of cattle with their noses in the air. All red and black they were, like the ragged tartans of many of the drivers. (For these were of the broken clans, and mostly MacGregors—though some of them called themselves by the name of Campbell, who were the worst of all.)

This parti-coloured tide flowed down the glen like a river in full flood. Only in the little eddy of Hunter's Tryst near the bottom, where Umphray Spurway waited, was there a sort of backwater. Into this the drover swept a score or two of cattle at a time, some of which

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Umphray Spurway approved. At other times he would have none of them, but pointed out a beast in the throng as it surged thundering past. Whereat one of the men on little shaggy ponies would plunge, at infinite danger of life and limb, into the tumult of the tide-race and guide the animal out, and so bring it, bellowing with rage and fear, to the appointed stance.

It was strange to observe at the summit of the Slap directly above us, the cattle appearing like a forest of branching horns, standing a moment to overlook the valley with heads up and eyes dilated, and then urged by those behind, surging forward again, while the noise of their mighty roaring came to us in the little vale of the Hunter's Tryst, like the triumphing of an angry sea that has broken bars and doors.

It was the first time I had seen the great English Droving, and a fine sight it was for man or boy to see.

Anna Mark and I ran forward to be ready to receive the first "mart." Anna had been given a stout-pointed "kent" or oaken staff to use as a goad. With this and her native agility she completely outran me. But little I cared for that, for was not the stone-throwing at hand? As I ran I did not observe that Anna had a bag of pebbles fastened to her waist even as I had myself. She kept close to Saunders MacMillan, a big herd from the rough mountains, whom Umphray employed to watch the sheep he pastured on the easterly hills, according to his agreement with Sir James, my grandfather, when he came first to the country.

The first beast is always the worst to put on the home road. For he has as yet no companions and he turns and twists, doubles and trebles, with feints and stratagems, as well as straight charges tail up and horns

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down, at all who stand in his path. As ill-luck would have it he came straight at me.

“Out of the way, boy!” cried Umphray Spurway, whose eyes were everywhere. But I wanted to distinguish myself, and stood straight in the beast’s way as he dodged to get back to the herd. The bull came head down, and just as I was firing a round pebble at his forehead, down I tripped over a stone. I felt hot breath blow upon me, and looked to be trampled to death. But, though at the gallop, he almost missed me, one cloot alone grazing the calf of my leg, and, as it happened, turning it many colours in a day or two.

There was now no one between the brute and the herd, and the Highland kerns had already set up a triumphant yell at our stupidity.

But in the critical moment, there in front flickered little Anna Mark, a “kent” shortened in her hand. One blow across the nose! He swerved. A poke in the shoulder! He turned. Anna dropped the kent, and with her right hand she selected a stone from the wallet at her waist, and with a sharp “clip” jerked it from her hip after the manner of shepherds. It flew straight, and took the “mart” on the ear. Another and yet another, each as truly aimed, succeeded. The beast turned no more, but with Anna behind it, and Saunders MacMillan and half-a-dozen weavers in chase, took a straight line through the little green hope of the Tryst in the direction of the vale of Moreham.

Then, indeed, there was a noise to speak about, and I, sitting up dazed and stupefied, heard the Highland-men shouting to Umphray Spurway: “Who is the lassie?”

“The lassie?” shouted another contemptuously, as he dressed the herd on the left flank. “Yon’s nae las-

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sie ! Yon's a kiltie lad—a son o' Donald Oig's, I'm thinkin', by his lang legs !”

Now little Anna Mark's high-kilted petticoats had misled him, and indeed not without some reason. For her hair was tied in a red kerchief after a manner that she had doubtless learned from her father, and as for the rest she was dressed much like one of their own limber heslips who scampered and climbed and yelled alongside the drove.

This was a great blow to me, and it was an hour or two before I could make any headway to get over it.

It was not jealousy so much as that she had not told me what she was doing, but had gone secretly to that great lout Saunders MacMillan, as coarse and clamper-some a lump as any of that name. And in Galloway that is saying no little.

“I wanted to surprise you—that is why I did not tell you !” she said afterwards, as she ran alongside, when once the homeward column was in good going order, and out of the disturbance caused by the ronting of the herd.

I said nothing. I was not yet ready to make up.

“Of course,” she said softly (for she could speak very gently when it liked her, which was not often), “I cannot throw as far as you, or flourish my arm about over my head. It is not the same thing.”

“You hit the beast and turned it, after it had knocked me over !” I replied gloomily.

“But look,” she cried, “I can miss as well !” she persisted.

“Let me see then !” said I.

A bullock at this moment turned and tried a last bolt.

“Turn him—turn him, witch wean !” cried Bowie Fleemister, the only Moreham man in the company, and

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a man who, having lassie bairns of his own, hated Anna Mark's favour with his employer.

Then the girl, with her eyes full on the charging bullock, "henched" a pebble, which indeed missed the animal, but by strange chance took Bowie Fleemister on the elbow joint!

"Ye hae broke my funny-bane, ye flichtersome wisp o' brimstane," he cried, dancing to and fro, and nursing his elbow in the palm of his other hand. "I'll hae ye discerned by the Session for a manifest witch, as your mither was afore ye!"

"You see, now!" said Anna, calmly, with her eyes cast down. "I can miss. I missed the bullock by as much as twenty yards!"

Yet somehow the instance was to me not wholly convincing.

Bowie Fleemister made his complaint to Umphray Spurway before the pain had wholly died out of his tingling finger tips.

"Yon ill-set randy lass-bairn has broken my shuttle-aim wi' a stane," he said truculently. "I'll never work mair a' my days! I want her banished out o' the country like her mither. There will never be peace in the mill till she be gane!"

"O yes, there will!" retorted Umphray Spurway, significantly, riding a little nearer to Bowie, who shrank away from him. Then bending a little from his horse and clenching his bare fist, the miln-master held it to Bowie's nostrils. "Yes," he added, "there will be peace in Umphray Spurway's mill, as long as that hand wags at the end of this good right arm!"

And Bowie Fleemister, the colour of tow, shrank still further between his own shoulders.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEW DOMINIE

BUT there was a sweeter, winsomer side to little Anna Mark than this. Where she got it from I know not—from her Maker, I expect. Nor, though I have known her all the years that have come and gone since those days in Umphray Spurway's mill-house, have I ever troubled my head on the subject.

Anna could not be called a very pretty child, perhaps. Her face was always browned by the sun, and till she was far into her teens an even tint of freckles was spread over her brow and cheeks, reaching well up on her brow and down behind her ears.

But for all that no man could pass her on the road without turning to look. Most women also, if only to say "There is something not canny about that lassie-bairn!" But when Anna looked directly at you, it seemed that you saw a spark of fire kindled far down in her eyes. And when she smiled, why then it was suddenly summer outside and a blue day. The herds on the hills would wait hours to have her company up the lonesome glens and out on the great flowes of heather. The grimy smiths in the "smiddy" in the villages, hammering at their horse "cackars" would drop rasp and pincers and run to the door at the words, "Here comes Anna!" And long after she was past they could be seen looking out after her, sheltering their eyes underneath grimy

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palms as she tripped up the street with Umphray Spurway.

But mothers, jealous for their own children, would call them in ostentatiously, lest they also should be englamoured with the fascination of the witch-bairn's spell. Every dounce well-born lassie in Moreham and New Milns was forbidden to play with little Anna Mark, and also encouraged to call names after her to keep her mindful of her condition. Usually, however, they only tried this last operation once. Then on the following day their mothers would come in deputation to Umphray Spurway, praying him to send the little wild cat away.

But the Englishman, caring no more for women's tongues than for the idle clashes of the villages, drove them out of his presence without more ceremony than if his mill gates had been invaded by a tail-wagging, loud-clacking flock of geese from off the common.

She had cast a glamour over him. That was evident. And the gossips took council together how most successfully to rid him of this spell and themselves of a pest and possible rival of their own growing daughters.

I had begged so hard to be allowed to stay with Umphray, and the Englishman had used such arguments to my mother to make her consent, that I was allowed to bide through the week at the mill-house. But on Saturdays Umphray himself took me down the water to my mother's house in the town of Abercairn, where I stayed till Monday, on which morning Caleb Clinka-berry convoyed me back half way, to the place called Hill o' the Cock, where William Bowman met us and relieved him of his charge.

When Umphray Spurway took me to my mother's he never stayed long, sitting only long enough to drink a

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cup of tea, and make his compliments on how well she was looking. His eyes were mostly upon the floor the while, uplifted to my mother only when she was ordering the tea bowls with her back to us or spooning the black China herb into the bottom of each.

I remember once saying to my mother, "Why does Umphray never look straight at you? Is he angry with you, or are you angry with him?"

Her cheek paled and then flushed again. I knew I was hurting her, and yet I kept on.

"I do not know whether he is angry with me," she replied. "I am not angry with him!"

And immediately she sent me forth to play on the quay with the town lads of my own age. For she had a notion that I might grow maidenish by associating so much with little Anna Mark! How far this was from the truth I have already indicated in this history. I fought a good fight behind the butcher's sheds with Allan Kemp, Mr. Smalltrash's 'prentice, and beat him by dodging blows as Anna Mark did mine; and then, in the nick of time, planting my left on the point of his chin after a feint at his breast, a thing I had learnt the trick of from her.

But when I was in Abercainr my mother thought that such ploys made me manly, and took no notice when I came home marked on Saturday night. Though she did not let me wander far on the Sabbath days—except to visit at the minister's, Mr. Nicol Aitkin—with whose son Jock I have fought as many as seven rounds during the time of service in the windowless corner by the side of the vestry, while his father was developing overhead his Seventhly in the application of the Gospel of Peace to the Christian Home.

So, unlike many Scottish bairns, I ever appreciated

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and enjoyed my Sabbath privileges—and specially the place where it was my lot to sit in the Kirk.

And now I come to relate that which sent me finally and without reprieve to the Grammar-school of Abercairn.

My uncle John, the falcon-beaked Edinburgh lawyer, had for a little taken it sorely to heart, that, his precious instrument being only of effect in case of my father's death, he had no control over me or over the estate. The latter, however, he managed in some sort to retain, as well as the power at the Great House, by a well-devised system of subservience to the will of my grandmother, the dowager Lady Stansfield.

This, as he was not a man to squander, my uncle was permitted to retain by Umphray Spurway and John Bell, though they informed him that he must in no case consider himself as my *curator bonis*.

It happened that about this time, when I was shooting up into a great lump of a lad, and Anna Mark growing ever lighter, straighter, winsomer, that the old dominie of Moreham died one bitter March day. He was observed to lean long against the wall of his little school, with his face to the whitewash, but as that was his ordinary in the act of prayer, none took any notice till he had been more than an hour in that posture. Then one John Dallas, a smith, went and clapped him kindly on the shoulder to tell him that the bairns were waiting for their Scripture. But he found the old man dead on his feet with his forehead against the cold whinstone of the gable-end.

It became necessary to fill his place, and as young Mr. John Stansfield was now so forward in matters of the kirk, and so great with my grandmother and Mr. Bell

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also, it chanced that the choosing of who should succeed the dead man was left in his hands. And late one night he brought one out from Edinburgh to be the new dominie.

He was a man far beneath the country standard of height and weight, and as he stood at the master's desk, a small, lean, swarthy man, his eyes very close together, and his hands corded and hairy on the backs, he looked quite unable to cope with the urchins of the ordinary classes. So that when the folk remembered the burly plough lads and young fighting cocks of farmers' sons who would be there in the winter, they smiled with significance, and said, "God help him!"

But in the meanwhile he did well enough. Bernard Ringrose was his name, and he entered on all the offices and emoluments of the old dominie without opposition or comment. He had store of Latin that was above cavil, and to a "humanity man," as he was called, the folk of a Scottish parish would forgive almost anything. Mr. Bell had examined the new dominie, it was said, and found him wondrously well equipped. Now this is what happened, as I had it long after from Mr. John Bell himself, when he had risen to be regent of the college and a great man.

The minister had a physician's prescription writ by a learned man whom he had known at the college of Edinburgh. It was made out in the English tongue so that the unlearned could understand it, but of late Mr. Bell had found no benefit from using it. So he was sending it with a letter to one Samuel Paterson in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, who was the main poticary and herb doctor in the city. With this paper in his hand, the minister one day entered the school of Mr. Ringrose in a kind of maze.

“Dominie Ringrose, I have a sore trouble on me,” he said, “I am even like Saint Paul. The thorn in the flesh doth sore wound and vex me. What think you of this prescription which the learned Dr. Conradus of Upsala gave me?”

The new dominie took the paper in the shaking hand which made many think him weak—for whenever the weather was moist and warm with a south or west wind his hands were wont to shake so that he could scarce hold a book to read it aright. At first this was set down to drink, but after, when it was seen what a temperate man was Mr. Bernard Ringrose, it was discovered to be an intermitting or tertian ague gotten from his life in strange lands. So now his hand shook as he took the paper from Mr. Bell, very careless like, and glanced at it.

“You have not been able to have this made up to your mind, minister?” he said, very high and clear.

“No,” said Mr. Bell, “seemingly the virtue is gone out of it. I am worse troubled than ever.”

“These are vulgar names, sir,” said the dominie, “and when such are used, oftentimes commoner growths are foisted on the unwary. Permit me to write the prescription in the Latin tongue, with the proper signs and quantities, and you will find that the virtue will quickly return.”

So he took a pen in hand and wrote rapidly, muttering to himself: “Instead of tutsane I will write *Agnus Castus*, instead of house-leek, a common misnomer, I will write *Singrene*.”

And so in a trice, with a quick dash of learned signs scattered like black pepper athwart the paper, he handed the prescription back again to the minister, who was so much impressed that if the dominie had told him to

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eat the paper, it would have benefited him as greatly. At least, when the medicine was brought back from the poticary in Edinburgh, Mr. Bell went everywhere telling of the great skill and prowess of the new dominie in the Latin tongue.

Likewise the people of Moreham need not have troubled about his ability to cope with any offenders in his school. It came speedily to a crisis. Allan Allison it was who refused one day to leave his place, and being a great fellow of well-nigh twenty years, and a known fighter, he told the master to come and take him out of the bench if he wished, and were able. Whereat, without the waste of a word, the dominie made a spring sudden and fierce as that of a cat after a bird. He used no entreaties. He made no apology. He simply flew at Allan Allison's throat, and the next moment Allan was lying on the floor, with the dominie erect above him, his iron-shod heel uplifted above the rebel's face and threatening to stamp the life out of him.

Verily there was order in the school-house of Moreham all the days of Bernard Ringrose—which, however, were not to be many.

For about this time the noise of terrible breakings of houses and bloody murders done upon their owners (it was said by smugglers) ran with a mighty bruit through all Scotland south of the Tay. Strong men went in fear, women shrieked at the cry of a bird, and bairns swarfed, if left alone, just as in the days when Philip Stansfield was first lost in the woods.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EYES BEHIND THE GAUZE

THAT which I am now going to tell happened at the November term, when Umphray Spurway, as was his wont, had given permission to most of his folk to go visit their friends where they would, and he himself had gone with a sufficient number to carry to the seaport of Abercairn all the tweeds and webs of broadcloth he had manufactured during the past six months. He departed on Monday with the first grey light of dawn. On the Friday night he was to return with all his money, and one or two of the trustiest lads riding with him in company. The rest, with a month's wage burning a hole in their pockets, abode in the town itself, or tailed off at various change-houses along the way.

In the Miln House abode only Will Bowman, little Anna Mark, and myself. There was no weaving done all that day, and in the great sheds with the huge bolted doors and barricaded windows we three played at "tig" and "hi-spy," and other games to while away the time. For when his master was absent Will Bowman was every whit as boyish and bairnly as we.

The twilight fell early, bringing a light sifting snow with it, which, however, hardly whitened the roads. It was bitter cold, notwithstanding, and in the Miln House we made up the fires, and in the great weaving-sheds also. Will Bowman built up a pile of boughs and roots on the dogs of the firegrate, chiefly that we might see to play,

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by the pleasant crackle and dance of the licking flames. So we raced and shouted, little Anna the wildest and quickest of the three.

But Umphray Spurway delayed his coming, so that it was pretty dark, or rather well into the grey dusk, when we heard the sound of wheels without, and, as it were, the shuffling of feet as of men moving a heavy weight.

Will Bowman ran out, and a voice out of the misty breath at the horses' heads bade him open the doors of the mill, for here was a case of fine foreign yarns which Umphray Spurway had sent them from Abercairn to deliver.

"I open the doors at no man's bidding," said Will, "till I see my master's hand of write." Then the leader of the carriers thrust a paper under his nose.

"There, then," he said, "if you can read; I can't!"

"Well," said Will, after considering the paper, "wait till I get some of the weaver lads to help in with the case!" And so at the word he ran to the back of the house-door and blew three blasts upon the horn. Now it chanced that some of the weavers had slept all day, and were only now arousing themselves to wash and make ready to go again to the change-house. So a dozen or more came drowsily enough at the summons. Then the great doors were unclosed and the huge sheeted package brought in.

It had a foreign appearance, but nothing much out of the common in Umphray Spurway's mill, being done up in sacking, with curious marks stamped upon it in tar or some sticky kind of ink. It was, however, not particularly heavy, for four of the weavers carried it in between them.

"It can sit there till our master returns," said Will

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Bowman, eager to get rid of the intruders, for these road carters had no good name.

“Content!” said the chief of the Abercainn carriers; “then do you give us our discharge, a glass of spirit apiece, and let us be going—for we have far to travel to-night, while you bide safe by the fireside.”

So Will bade the weavers wait till he had written a receipt specifying the marks upon the case. In the meanwhile he ordered Anna to supply a glass of raw country spirit to each of the men, which they took with a muttered salutation. They were tall men, and so soon as the weavers appeared they utterly refused to come within the lighted weaving-shed, urging that they could not leave their horses alone without. So Anna carried the spirit out upon the highway.

In a little while Will Bowman heard the rattle of their horses’ feet on the hard-beaten road, and looking out we saw the cart rumbling away into the frost-bitten air of night through a kind of cloud which was the steam of the overheated horses.

The weavers dispersed quickly, mostly to sneak away to the change-houses at the hamlets of New Milns and Moreham, some of the younger to court their joes in byres and at barn ends, one or two merely to go back again to sleep.

So we three were left alone in the great Miln House with the newly arrived packing-case. It stood in the corner across the angle of the weaving-shed with its plain broad side to the blinking fire. Will Bowman replenished the iron dogs with a new load of wood, and we went on with our game. But somehow from that moment the spirit seemed gone out of the hide-and-seek. For ever as we ran and hid, a dodging shadow seemed to our imaginations to run beside us, overleaping the looms and evading

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the eye, as it were, by a bare inch when we looked back over our shoulders. Once Anna, to deceive us, hid in the little dusky triangle behind the packing-case.

We two were going about to find her, for I had already captured Will Bowman, when all of a sudden she gave a wild scream, and came running to us, crying that the case was alive.

"Nonsense, little one," cried out Will, greatly amused. "Some yarn is alive enough when it comes here—both with 'high-jumpers' and 'slowbellies.' But this, I warrant, is the finest Spanish wool, white as milk, fine as a wisp of silk and very expensive."

But Anna only clutched my arm, and panted, "Philip, I heard something move within. I tell you I heard it!"

"Tush!" said Will Bowman, "let us go to supper! Forget it, Anna. You had been running too fast, and you heard your own heart beating. So have I many a time!"

"Nay, I heard that, too! I was not mistaken," she made answer earnestly. And so to convince her, Will got a lanthorn, and walking hand in hand with little Anna in the midst, we approached the packing-case, which being set on end towered above my head, though tall Will Bowman could see on to the top of it.

We examined the thing minutely, back and side and front. It was evidently of some light wood and well packed. For when tilted and let down violently on the floor the contents made no noise. Will Bowman tapped it about with a hammer, and found it all of wood on every side, with many bored air-holes, and in front a square of a common yellowish gauze, wide-meshed and coarse, covered a larger hole. That was done, Will said, for ventilation, and was common in all their foreign consignments.

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After all was carefully gone over, Will bade us hold our breaths and listen. We did so, but save for the stirrings within us and the crackling of the logs on the hearth, all was silent, inanimate, dead.

"Well, are you content, little woman?" said Will, patting Anna on the head. But she went out with her face turned over her shoulder, looking back at the thing which had affrighted her.

In the house-place of the private dwelling there was a sense of comfort and safety which even I felt strongly. It was good to be rid of that ugly case in the dusky corner of the weaving-room, yet I could not get little Anna's shriek out of my mind. It was so sudden, and so unlike her.

"I thought I heard my father whisper," she explained more than once in an awed voice. "So I cried out!"

And in spite of the foolishness of it, the saying stuck to me. We had supper—beef cold cut thin on wooden platters, wheaten bread, and plenty of home-brewed ale. That is, Umphray only allowed us one mug apiece when he was at home, and to that we now confined ourselves. It did not matter to any if Will and I treated ourselves to a somewhat larger size in tankards.

So in a little the home-brewed gave me courage, and it came into my head that I was in good case to go alone into the weaving-room, where the box stood—to show Anna that I cared nothing about the matter, and that I was as brave as any Will Bowman could be, though he *had* marched with Umphray Spurway's militia.

So I betook me alone into the great shed, and my spirit revived when I thought what Anna would think of me. The case stood in the corner, still and plain-sheeted like many another that I had seen come to the mills of Umphray Spurway.

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I threw some logs on the fire, and stirred the others with my toe so that a bright flame sprang up. More and more I threw on in sheer idleness till I could no longer bear the heat. Then I looked about for something to shield my face, but saw nothing on the mantel-board save some tallow dips and a little cracked hand-glass, before which the mill lasses were wont to order their snoods and part their hair at the resting hour of noon.

This without thought I took in hand, and held between me and the fire. The pine branches burnt clear and high, and all the great shadowy place of beams and cross-threads, carders and spindles glinted light. The flames danced on the floor and glittered upon the walls, losing themselves, however, among the evasive shadows between the cross-beams and the dusky cobwebby roof.

I felt curiously at ease, and it was with a kind of exaltation that I bethought me of Will in the lighted parlour talking to Anna Mark. I was no more than a boy, as Will often said. Yet I was not afraid to sit there in the dusk, with that great ghostly ease staring at my back out of the night.

Involuntarily I happened to look at the reflection of it in the hand-mirror. My heart fluttered like a bird which has dreamed itself free, brought suddenly up against the wires of a cage.

I saw, in the strong firelight, the leaping flames gleam red on the outline of a face and on a pair of eyes that watched me steadily through the coarse yellow gauze in the front of the packing-case.

CHAPTER XV

WILL BOWMAN COUNTS THREE

THAT I did not scream out as Anna Mark had done when she crouched behind the case, I have always put down to a last wisp of Dutch courage given me by Umphray's small ale. At any rate I only dropped my glass, and stared at the fire hard, trying to think what I should do.

Clearly I must tell Will at once, and yet if I moved away with any haste the Thing inside would naturally suspect and spring out upon me. So I continued idly throwing wood on the fire for some time, as it had been to while away the heavy-hanging hours, breaking pieces off dry boughs and tossing them like one careful of his aim.

Presently there was a noise in the parlour, and the voice of William Bowman loud in some argument.

"Coming, Will!" I cried aloud, starting quickly from my seat as if I had heard him call me.

And with my heart in my mouth I went to the door which led within the house, my own dark shadow stalking lengthily before me, uncertain and blurred in the leaping flames of the burning wood. I did not dare even to glance in the direction of the mysterious packing-case. But I shut and bolted the door behind me so soon as I had passed through.

Will Bowman was going up the stairs to bed with his boots in his hand.

WILL BOWMAN COUNTS THREE

"Will," I whispered, "Will—we are all dead men. What Anna said is true. There is a murderer in that case."

Will paused on the second step.

"What do you mean? Have you gone as mad as Anna?" he said, smiling.

But as soon as I had told him of the eyes and face which had looked at me through the coarse veiling, he came back down the stairs and began to consider, scratching his head and thinking hard, without ever dropping the boots out of his hand.

"The weavers are either away with their master, or over to the change-houses by this time," he meditated. "There will not be one sober man in New Milns by this hour of the night. Philip, are you staunch? Can you stand behind me in this? I will go and outface him now, thief or murderer, or whatever he may be!"

I answered that I would certainly do that which in me lay, though I knew not what he meant to be at.

He was back in a moment with a couple of small swords and a dagger.

"Come on," he said, "we will try good cold steel on our lurker. A pass or two will do my master's Spanish wool no great harm, while shooting blazing wads into it at short range would set the stuff on fire. And a thing like that would be the end of me with Umphray Spurway!"

So giving me one of the rapiers, Will Bowman took a candle in one hand, and his own small sword in the other. We went into the great silent weaving-shed, where he set the candlestick down on a loom. But, indeed, with all my throwing of fuel on the dogs of the grate, the place was like day, and even the dark corner where the packing-case stood was filled with light.

As we went softly down the floor we heard a quick

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patter of feet behind us, and, lo! there at the door was little Anna Mark with a pistol in her hand.

"Ah," she was beginning, "did I not tell you? I thought——"

But Will stopped her with a wave of his hand. We stood before the canvas-covered case. It loomed up bigger than ever, looking blank and inanimate enough to have contained a dozen gravestones.

I heard Will suck in a long breath as he threw back the sword that was in his hand to be ready for the thrust. Then he spoke in a loud voice.

"Now," he cried, "we know that there is a man inside this packing-case. We are here fully armed, and are resolved to try the truth of our suspicion. Whoever you may be, I bid you, in my master's name, and the name of the law, to surrender yourself. I will count three, and thereafter thrust the case through and through with my sword. I give you fair warning!"

Then he counted slowly, "One!"

There was no sign or sound from the packing-case, though we listened intently, and I own that I quaked to my very shoe-leather.

"Two!"

Still there was no answer, not a sigh or a quiver, not the stirring of a rat in the wainscot.

"For the last time I warn you, whoever you are!" said Will Bowman, very grave and slow; "after I count three I will thrust. And the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

I knew where he had gotten that. He had seen it in the Old Bailey trials, a collection of which was in the house.

Having so spoken, he paused, it might have been five seconds or five hours, I know not.

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"Three!" he counted, in a loud shout, sudden and jubilant.

His sword arm darted out, the clean steel jerking forward like an arrow. The thrust appeared to pass right to the back of the case, easily and silently.

Will withdrew the steel with a great gasp of relief.

"There," he cried fiercely, "will that set you at rest? Or are you glad that your cursed imagination should put us all in this fret for nothing? You, Philip, deserve a raw-hiding, or, better, a good cobbing with a barrel-stave over a beam, when Umphray comes home. And, by gad, you shall have it, too."

He looked angrily about at us as we stood a little way behind him.

"But see," he cried, "I will take it on myself to make certain!"

And with a quick hand, and in a sudden characteristic burst of anger, he tore away the rough sacking and yellow gauzy stuff from the blow-hole in front. A square of wool, fine and white and clean, was revealed—nothing else.

"Th-there!" he cried, actually stammering in his anger, "get to bed, both of you, for wretched little croaking blasties! And let me fasten up this case again as best I may."

He was bending down to pick up the torn sheeting, when, in a clear childish treble, little Anna Mark uttered the words: "*Will, what is that on the point of your sword?*"

William Bowman held his sword up. Lo! the fine point of the rapier was tinged with red for a good three inches. A drop or two had distilled upon the floor.

Instantly Will's face took on the fighting look of his North Riding forefathers. His under jaw shot forward,

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his forehead seemed to flatten. His eye fell on the case, and, in the midst of the white square of wool, a red spot had appeared at the place from which Will had withdrawn his blade.

"Ah, I have you this time, cowardly murderer!" he cried in a voice like a trumpet.

"Hold, hold, Will! Do not kill him!" I shouted. But I was too late. Will felt with his rapier point for the row of small air-holes which went about the case above the middle, and through these he sent thrust after thrust, swift as the succession of pulsing lightnings in mid-tempest.

Then followed the most appalling cry that it has ever been my lot to listen to. No words came from the recesses of the box, only scream on scream of direst human agony. There followed also signs of vehement upheaval within. And after rocking violently to and fro, with a mighty crash the packing-case fell face downward upon the floor.

I ran to the door in terror and horror. But William Bowman stood his ground with little Anna Mark beside him. Her face was white, but she passed him the loaded pistol without a word.

Then with the pistol cocked in his hand and levelled at the box, he called to me over his shoulder to run to the change-house and warn all that were there. Then I was to return, beating the weavers' cottages for recruits. Let it not be doubted that I ran my best, snatching the alarm-horn and blowing it as I went. So that in half an hour I was back with a dozen men, all more or less untouched by liquor.

Will Bowman stood where I had left him, with a set look of grim determination on his face. But little Anna was nowhere to be seen. He had ordered her to bed as

WILL BOWMAN COUNTS THREE

soon as he began to realise what might appear when the box was opened. Perhaps, also, he remembered her words, "I thought I heard my father whisper!"

The men slowly turned the packing-case up from the blood-stained floor, and stood it face forward as it had been at the first. Then with bars of iron and pickaxes they tore away the boards. Wool was packed tightly at the sides and all around, but as they lifted this away swiftly and fearfully, the arm of a man holding a pistol appeared, still twitching with the last remnants of vitality. Another pull and the face was revealed.

It was that of Bernard Ringrose, the new dominie.

He appeared to be quite dead.

Then I thought, as I went upstairs and found Anna Mark, a little white-clad figure, listening on the stairs, that surely now the end of the evil had come, and that the murderous hound who had so long disturbed the peace of Scotland, had at last been taken in his own trap. I knew not that this was only one broken thread in the net of tribulation which was closing upon us all.

"Go to bed, little Anna!" I said, "all is well!"

CHAPTER XVI

ANNA MARK MOUNTS GUARD

THEY laid the Dominic back again in his beautifully fitted case, among the wool and the stained scraps of netted fabric. Will Bowman's first thrust had gone through his shoulder a little beneath the spring of the neck. Yet so fierce was the desperado in his determination, that no murmur had escaped him even when the sharp steel ran clear through his flesh till the point encountered the wooden back of the case against which his shoulders were braced.

A knife, with a sharply curved blade, was in his right hand, doubtless intended first to cut a way out of his wrappings, and then, secondly, to slit every throat in the Miln House—for that was the pattern of previous attempts of the same kind made at other mansions and lonely places throughout Scotland.

Now, there were at that time in Scotland many thousands of broken and outlaw men. Indeed, the wisest head in all the realm (that of one Fletcher of Saltoun) estimated the "beggars and gangrels" alone—that is, the open and declared vagabondage—at nothing short of two hundred thousand. So, what with the recent changes of government, the troubles within the Highland border, the incursions of the caterans, the encouragement of piracy and worse upon the seas, men lived in a kind of terror, and all who could provided, as Umphray Spurway hoped he had done, for their own safety.

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The King's army, save a regiment or so about the capital, was either scattered athwart the face of the Jacobite districts or had been carried overseas to help the Dutch to fight the French.

So it came to pass that in the most settled and loyal of all the provinces of Scotland the worst and wildest deeds began to be wrought—at first under the cloud of night, but in a little while in open daylight also.

And thus it happens that in every district of Lowland Scotland there remains one unvarying bruit of the deeds of these desperadoes, who at various times called themselves "The Night Rakers," "The Bold Lads," "The Devil's Dragoons"—and were famed over all the south country as "The Wild Riders."

In at least three cases their attempts had been successful, and on every occasion a large package had, upon some pretext, been delivered the night before at the doomed house. But this was the first time they had tried so great and defenced a place as Umphray Spurway's mill.

And right well had they chosen their time—Umphray away with the most part of his men, the rest taking advantage of his absence, all save a sober few, and leaving their houses empty and the mill itself well nigh defenceless.

As soon as Will Bowman realised what he had done, he set about making his preparations. He despatched by a back door one of the most trusty of the men who had hurriedly rallied to him, with orders to call in all the women and children out of their houses. For, believing that the defences of the mill would be tried before morning, he would permit no man to return to his house. Nor indeed was there any who, looking at the set face of the Dominie and the lip he had bitten through in the vain

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attempt to keep his secret, desired to set a foot outside the defences of the Miln House that night.

As I have said, the figure of the mill was four square, with a large courtyard in the centre. On the river side little watch was necessary, the Esk Water fretting against the sheer walls both darksome and deep, and effectually preventing any surprise. The easterly or upstream end was defended in like manner by a gorge, across which straddled, on its trellis-work of wood, the "lade" that carried the water to the great wheel. There were, moreover, windows along this side, from which a sharpshooter or two could enfilade a regiment. But it was on the side averse from the river and on the bare contiguous northerly front that the burden of any attack must fall.

For the buildings that ran round the square courtyard were of wood set in a foundation of stone, and if any evil-designing person got to within lighting distance of these, the whole mill, upon which Umphray Spurway had expended his life and fortune, would mount up in a sheet of flame to the skies. There were many also who hated him, not only because of his success and supposed riches, but because he was an Englishman, using mostly his own countrymen to weave for him, and (as it seemed to the ignorant and even to some of those who should have known better) taking the bread out of the mouths of honest Scots. For those who wove in their own homes at small narrow looms, could only produce a web one-third the width of Umphray's cloth and at a far greater expense of time, labour, and material.

I did not bide long upstairs, you may be sure. The heart-flutter and tremulous excitement of the night would not let me go to sleep. Indeed, I never so much as tried, but sat on my bed listening to the hum about the mill as this one ran this way and the other that. I

could distinguish clearly the sharp incidence of Will Bowman's shouted orders upon the walls of the quadrangle. Presently I heard a light step in the passage without.

I peeped out at the door, and there, if you please, with her bandolier over her shoulder, her powder-flask, pistol, and skean dhu (or Highland dirk), was little Anna Mark, pretending to mount guard on the side which looks to the south over the mill lade and the birchen linn to the Kirkconnel Water singing below in the dusk.

At sight of her array I was greatly stung. I, a boy, and the first discoverer of treachery, was behindhand in the defence of the place which gave me shelter, while a very girl——

Yet, after all, it was little Anna Mark. And that was a very different thing, I told myself.

As soon as she saw me she called out, "Oh, Philip, you are there—I thought you had gone to bed!"

And so, haughty as might be, continued her promenade in a military manner.

"I am going into Umphray Spurway's room," said I, "to get his new musket that has the bayonet devised by the general who ran away at Killiecrankie."

"I dare you to take it!" she said, for she did not want me to be better armed than she.

"And pray, miss, what have you to do with it?" I asked her.

She nodded her head in an aggravating way she had upon occasion, as one who would say, "Never mind," yet refrains from saying it.

"I wager you a pound I will take it—aye, and use it too, and never be faulted for it!" I made answer. For I thought of my mother and of my standing with Umphray Spurway on her account.

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"Done!" she cried, with her thumb caught rakishly in the strap of her bandolier, like a frolick blade standing guard in a place where he can be stared at by the maids.

I ran towards Umphray Spurway's room to get the new musket, which I had always coveted an occasion to try. But when I got to the upper door I heard a mocking laugh behind me which quickened both my pace and my desire. The door stood open, and as soon as I got within I saw that the nest was empty and the bird flown. The musket was gone, with all the other arms of the better sort which Umphray kept in his bedchamber for safe and dry keeping.

I came out again, and there, with the very musket I had been seeking dropped to the ready, the bayonet fixed, and the priming in the pan, stood Anna Mark, who stamped her little foot and called on me to stand in the King's name, in the most approved fashion.

Whereat I bade her to be careful, for that such things were not to be trifled with save by those who understood them. At which Mistress Malapert turned up her nose, and handing me the piece, she cried, "Sir Philip Wiseacre, see if Umphray himself could have charged it any better!"

It was true. All was perfect when I examined it, and, with very good intent I could yet find no fault.

"There!" she said, "you might have had this at the first if you had asked properly. I made it ready for you. So do not forget that airs and graces neither become nor advantage you with me, Master Philip Stansfield!"

To this I had no time to reply, nor indeed any answer ready to hand. So I betook me down the stairs, having secured Umphray's powder-flask and twenty charges of ball.

I found Will Bowman a very important and a very

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proud youth indeed. The women and children he had put in the low vaulted storage chambers over the river, where they would be safe both from the danger of fire and from stray shots.

He had at his disposal only seven men upon whom he could rely to see him through the night, and this, with Anna and myself, was all his fighting force.

Five of the seven he had set at various loopholes along the side which looks down the river. For there he judged was our greatest danger.

He himself, with a man who had skill in gunnery, was to have charge of the little four-pounder carronade which was placed on the top of the main gate-house tower. The battlements of this stood a little out and were constructed to sweep the whole long eastern side.

One man was placed on the roof of the mill to watch the water-front, while Anna Mark had installed herself, as I have already told, in the corridor which overlooks the little linn of Kirkconnel.

Presently I stood on the tower with Will and the man he had chosen as his companion, one Stephen Sawkins, Umphray Spurway's carpenter. He was a bronzed man with large silver rings in his ears, like those worn by Saul Mark, and was a Kentish man by birth.

"Ah, Master Bowman," he was saying when I reached the top, "this is the first time I have shotted a gun since I sailed with my brother Captain Sawkins to the South Seas and the Isle of Plate. Turned over a new leaf I have, Master Will, since the day we took Hilo and got a pint of molasses apiece for our pains!"

"If you were in that business, you ought all to have been hanged for bloody pirates, every dog of you!" said William Bowman, drawing the tarred sail-cloth off the

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carronade and kneeling before it while Stephen Sawkins stood by with a lantern in his hand.

"Nay, Master Will," objected the latter, "we never robbed our fellow countrymen, but only Spaniards and other suchlike papistical settlers, not one of them properly married or with any respect for living religion, like as Englishmen have."

"Quit arguing, and see you if this charge be all right," said Will; "we will fight them with grape."

Stephen Sawkins laughed.

"Right—aye, right enow," he said. "This will sting them rarely, whether they come on horse or on foot!" He sighed as a thought came over him, "Pray God, they come at all!" he added.

Nor was it long till we had tidings of Mr. Ringrose's associates. Will had purposely allowed no lights anywhere, save and except the dark lantern which he had himself taken to the top of the gate-tower in order that he might see to cast loose and load the carronade. Now, whether the Dominie was to make some signal to his mates with a lantern or no I cannot tell. Certain it is that one was found, with the tinder, flint, and steel all ready to be lighted at his feet. And it may be that Will or Stephen Sawkins, turning the glim this way and that at the charging of their piece, unwittingly made the signal agreed upon, or, at least, something like it. So much was never known.

At all events, it was not long before, in the dim light, we could make out a row of dark figures running from the willow copses and scrubby oakwoods on the north and east towards the Miln House.

We three crouched behind the battlements of the little tower and strained our eyes into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RESURRECTION OF DOMINIE RINGROSE

THE enemy came on in three divisions to the number of, apparently, some thirty or forty, but our fears and the night may very like have doubled their numbers.

The largest part ran straight for our gate-tower. Another band made for the north side and scrambled down into the ditch with intent to reach the line of windows. Little did they suspect that behind each second one of those crouched a stout weaver accustomed to the use of arms, with a loaded musket at his shoulder. A third and smaller number, not more than three or four, descended into the gully of Kirkconnel linn in the direction of the "mill lade." In fact they attacked all three vulnerable parts of the Miln House.

At the gate immediately beneath us, the main party paused in evident astonishment. It was of massy wood strengthened with plates and bosses of wrought iron. They had evidently expected to find it open, and when it loomed up before them solid and uncompromising they stopped dumbfounded and dismayed.

Then one bolder than the rest, a tall figure etched in blackness against the grey-green turf, went boldly up and tried both halves, throwing his whole weight upon them. They rested still, silent, and immoveable. Then this apparent leader went back to consult. Had they mistaken the signal? Was it a trap?

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They were meditating when the voice of Will Bowman rang out:

"What do you here under arms at my master's gate? If you do not instantly betake yourselves off whence you came, I will blow you all to the devil!"

We could see their line reel at the unexpected challenge and make a movement backward. I know not what they would have done if they had been left to themselves—perhaps retreated. But at that moment from the deep gully of the linn there came first one shot and on the heels of that another. Then there was the cry of one in pain, the hoarse cry of a man. It was little Anna Mark at work, first of all the defenders of the Miln House to smell burning powder.

"Bravo!" cried Stephen Sawkins; "shall I let them have it, Master Will?"

"Hold," said Will, "it is my duty to save life if I can——"

"Aye, but our own, not the lives of cut-throats such as these!" muttered the ex-buccaneer.

"I will speak once more to them!"

"You will waste your words!" said Sawkins.

Will began in a loud, clear voice:

"Your spy is dead. We are fully prepared for you. You cannot take our fortress. With a movement of my hand I can sweep you all to perdition. But I give you a chance to save your lives for the gallows. Call off your men, leave us and our houses unmolested, and we will serve you the same."

"Dog of the English," cried a voice, "we will not leave one alive in all your dirty kennel. We will burn you alive to teach you to bide at home and not come here, taking the bread out of our mouths!"

Then another voice deeper and fiercer cried: "For-

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ward!" And with a loud shout, a full score rushed at the door. It stood the strain, and then two of the assailants brought fore-hammers and room was made for them to wield them.

Clang!—went the first on the outer plate of the great lock. And we could hear the sound reverberate through the weaving hall, where lay the body of the dead spy in his comfortable packing of wool.

The door leaped on its hinges, and the man swung his hammer for a second blow.

"Once more I warn you—and for the last time!" cried Will, depressing the muzzle of the carronade over the battlement while Stephen Sawkins cowered and sighted behind for the heads of the throng. "Go back, all you who value your lives!"

The only answer was the thunder of both hammers on the door at once, and the startling reverberation of the sound from within as from a vast drum. Then from along the north side came a straggling volley. The five weavers had fired upon the foes who were escalading their defences.

A black worm with a glowing tip approached the touch of the four-pounder.

"Stand away!" said Will, as Stephen hovered behind, still anxious about his aim.

There was a leap of flame from the touch-hole, a thundering crack which momentarily deafened us, and then there ensued an awful turmoil beneath, shrieking and moaning, oaths of rage, and cries of despair. I looked over the battlement, but being temporarily blinded by the tongue of flame which burst from the gun, I could make out nothing save a writhing confusion, a whirl of limbs and white faces, some gripping and biting their neighbours in their agony, like so many crabs in a basket,

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while the confused sound went up to heaven in a many-voiced shriek of despair.

From the tower-top there went forth no sound of triumph. Will Bowman and Stephen Sawkins were too busy making ready for the next line of assailants. But none were prepared to adventure further just then. They had not even begun to carry off their wounded.

But from the other side of the Miln House we heard the triumphant cries of the assailants as they climbed up to the lower windows. The muskets of the weavers spoke again and again, as it seemed, without much effect.

“Run, Philip,” cried Will; “go to the corner there, and from the jutting loft you can command the whole northern front. We shall not need you here.”

For, indeed, I confess that thus far I had been of no use in the fray, so stunned was I between the suddenness of the report and terrible effect of the grapeshot upon the assailants of the gateway.

On the way to the north corner I had to pass through the great dim weaving-room, now dusked and terrible to me with the thought of the dead lying in the very bier on which he had laid himself a living man. Yet the ladder by which I must mount was immediately at the back of the packing-case, and to gain my post I must needs pass it.

As I went hastily by I had not meant to look at it. Indeed, I had been nerving myself all the way to keep my eyes straight in front of me. But a stealthy noise somewhere in the room and a momentary upleaping of the flames of the dying fire drew my regard, in spite of myself, to the place where I had seen them lay the dead man.

Then it was that I got the most horrid surprise that

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ever in all my life stilled and dismayed my immortal soul within me. *The packing-case was empty.*

And beyond it, in the direction of the stirring noise which I had heard, my eyes fell upon a sight to affright and subvert my reason. He that had been dead was standing by the great doors, swaying, staggering on his feet, and yet all the while endeavouring to undo with his hands the great iron stanchions, so that when pushed against from without the leaves might open inwards.

I cried aloud in fear. My hands trembled so that I dropped my musket on the ground. In a moment the terrifying apparition had turned towards me. I saw the countenance of a dead man come to life, streaked and blotched with blood, the eyes, fixed and injected, staring like knots in window glass with an inward green light. Scraps of wool stuck to his dress here and there, with an effect incomparably bizarre. Yet such was the strength and fidelity of the man in evil-doing, that at the first sight of me he swerved, and steadying himself, with an inarticulate cry that was more than half a moan, he raised the knife which was in his right hand and came towards me with the stealthy tread of a wild beast.

His mouth was wide open to draw in enough air to clear, for the moment, his clogging lungs. His breath came in laboured and gurgling pants; nevertheless he had the resolution to pursue me, in order that he might finish the work for which he had come, and open the great doors for his friends.

I had scarcely time to leap behind the empty case before he was upon me. I tried to escape either way about it, but for all his swaying uncertainty of motion he was ready there with his knife. So I had to content myself with feinting first to the right and then to the left. I was afraid that he would see my musket lying at the foot

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of the stairs; but either his glazed eyes did not perceive it, or, as is more probable, he did not judge it wise for the success of his project to fire a shot. At any rate, he began slowly and deliberately to move the empty packing-case towards me in order to trap me in the corner.

It must have been the weirdest spectacle, and had I been able to watch it as an uninterested spectator, the duel between the terrified boy, dodging and doubling like a cornered rat, and the dying man grimly resolved to finish his dire work, must have been worthy of the Roman arena. Gradually and methodically the Dominic reduced the space in which I turned and twisted, pivoting the box alternately on one angle and on the other. Then he would lean over to see if he could reach me with his knife. At last I was so pent in that I could move neither way, and as soon as I realised this I lifted up my voice in a great piteous cry of "Anna—Anna Mark!"

The terrible streaked face, the gouted breast, and the fingers clutching the knife were very near to me now. I could see the ruddy foam break in bubbles between the bleached grey of his lips. But at the cry of "Anna Mark" he seemed to pause. I pushed with all my weight against the case. It toppled and fell over against his breast, causing him to stagger backward.

Then, ere he could recover and set it up again on edge, a sharp report came from the stairway, waking the echoes of the great weaving-room. My pursuer uttered a single sobbing cry, his knife jingled on the floor from his twitching hand, and he fell backward with all the weight of the packing-case upon him.

Little Anna Mark stood on the steps near the top with a smoking musket in her hand.

Then she threw it down and began to weep.

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“Oh, I have killed a man,” she cried. “I am a wicked, wicked girl.”

I ran to her and told her that the man was as good as dead at any rate, and that if she had not shot him down as she did, not only I, but all in the mill would have been ruthlessly slain.

Which was all very true, but did not at the time comfort her greatly.

“I will fight no more,” she said. “I never thought before about guns killing people.”

Having refixed as well as I could the single stanchions and the bolts the Dominie had drawn, I picked up my gun, and Anna and I ran up to the corner of the north side, from which we could see the whole exposed front of the mill. The moon had risen late in her last quarter, and now began to throw a pale light across the woods of Moreham.

The attack had completely failed. We could see a few figures hurrying away, mostly in bunches of three or four, apparently carrying off their dead between them, whilst a neighing of horses and a clattering of hoofs told that the robbers had made all ready for retreat.

Presently Will Bowman came rushing in.

“A glorious victory!” he said; “but, Lord, I would have given a whole year’s wages to have had another lick at them with the carronade full to the muzzle of slugs and rusty nails.”

I told him of my adventure, and we went down to look at the fastenings of the great doors, one of which had been forced up entirely. The marks of Ringrose’s hands were wet and red upon it. Had his friends returned to the attack, the doors would have opened at a touch.

We went down and looked at the man who had been so hard to slay, so faithful unto death in the Devil’s service.

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Three of Will's strokes had pierced him, but only one fatally. Anna's single bullet had sunk itself into his brain.

Will stood musing upon him.

"I tell you what, Philip Stansfield," he said presently; "there lies a kind of man with whom it was a toss-up whether he became his Grace of Marlborough or—this poor piece of carrion. This Dominic was a man brave enough to win a score of battles, but sometime or other he took the wrong turning. Well, Umphray Spurway will not think the worse of him for his pluck."

"Nor for trying to kill me?" I cried, for my charity did not reach so far, nor the matter strike me quite so impersonally.

"No," he answered coolly; "he held his tongue when I thrust him through and through, though he was held fast hand and foot in a dark box. And while dying by inches he could yet rise to finish his work before he went. I tell you what, Philip; if you and I stick to our jobs as well as this Dominic Ringrose—why, we may sit down and take a rest awhile when we find ourselves well out of it all."

CHAPTER XVIII

ANNA SENDS A CHALLENGE

WILLIAM BOWMAN sent Anna Mark and me off to bed with many expressions of commendation, saying that he would inform Umphray Spurway of our courage and resolution. And this presently he did, though, Heaven knows, it was little enough I had done. But, Anna Mark, being as jealous of what others should think of me as privately zealous to beat me at all manner of ploys, gave such an account of my struggle with the Dominie, that I had all the credit for having stopped him from opening the doors to his confederates.

And not to be outdone in generosity by a girl, I told them that but for her clever shot from the stairs I had been a very dead boy indeed, and in all probability most of those to whom I spoke as well.

In the early morning of the next day arrived Umphray Spurway with his whole caravan, and a wild man he was when he found the wicked fact that had so nearly been perpetrated upon his folk and property.

Without pausing even for food he started to hunt down the outlaws. But they had dispersed over a great morass called Crichton Moor that lies to the north, a few going this way and a few that. The only clear trail led to a little sheltered cove called Byness Bay, and here were many traces of horses and the trampling of gravel down to the shore plain to be seen. So it was thought that the dead had been taken out to be buried in the sea,

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each with a stone tied to his feet, and that the others, who were not of the country and secretly allied with the desperadoes, had escaped in a ship. A fisherman on the shore told Umphray how that as he was going down to fish for lobsters, a voice from an anchored lugger hailed him and bade him keep away, if he did not want a leaden bullet in his gizzard.

And on his replying that he was wishful to do no harm, but only to set his partan cages in Byness Bay, a black-a-vised man in a knitted cap set his head over the bulwarks and bade him do no harm somewhere else than in Byness Bay for a day or two.

“See you,” he said, “if your wife be a good sort, don’t you go crosswise to make her a widdy. For that’s no kindness to her, unless she knows of a better man than you be! So take my advice, go south or go north—but keep wide of this cove till you see our topsails low over the north water.”

“An ugly deil he was—so I took my traps on my back and awa’ across to the Black Point. It’s no chancy to argie-bargie wi’ yon kind o’ foreigneerin’ gentry!”

And so, strange as it may seem, none heard of any dead in all the country-side, though some few were never heard of again—young sparks, too, of no mean degree, who were said by their families to have departed overseas, but who were shrewdly suspected to have had a hand in the “Brenning oot o’ the Englishman,” which was the name the action got—from the intent, not the deed—of the assailants.

And after this I was no more permitted to spend all my holidays at the house of Umphray Spurway. And this was chiefly owing to an idea my poor mother had that those who attacked the Miln House intended chiefly to kill me, and not merely to plunder the mill—alleging

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in proof thereof that the spy Bernard Ringrose had been a tool of my Uncle John's, and if he were not, why had he risen as it were from his very grave to attack her only son with his knife?

And from this she could not be beaten, though even Umphray Spurway laughed at her. Yet surely it was not possible that a man of law and one so nearly related to me could wish me ill. And, moreover, if he did, there were many ways of injuring me without assaulting the chiefest stronghold in the country-side.

So home to my mother I went to the little house in the Vennel whose gable looks down on the port and out on the sea, washing the very sand to our doors, a mighty change for a laddie bred on the hills. Before me as I drew on my breeks in the morn were the hundred masts of the harbour of Abercairn, the tall sea-going ships riding without at their anchor-holds, the coast-wise schooners dimpling on the swell midway, and a score of smacks packed along the quay like herrings on a string.

Then such rolling tarry sailors as slouched and smoked along the sea-front, such curious oiled curls, pierced ears, strange oaths as were among these jolly shiver-my-timbers comrades. All the sullen, melancholy, sour humours of the Covenanting hills seemed in an hour blown away by the sunburnt mirth and many-tongued joviality of the seaport of Abercairn.

My mother, however, had a new grievance. She had often pressed it upon Umphray Spurway that he was not the person to bring up a well-grown girl verging upon fourteen or fifteen, who would soon spring into a woman. And so my mother offered to take Anna Mark as her daughter and bring her up with me in our little house at Abercairn.

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“She needs other governance than yours,” said my mother to Master Spurway. “What skills it that she can shoot and fish and play backsword as well as any man in ten parishes? She is not a man, and the doing of these things will only shame her the more.”

Here I protested vehemently, and was promptly put to silence with an asperity quite foreign to my mother’s nature. “You know nothing about the matter, Philip. Run your ways out and play.”

So for the time I went ill enough pleased, and left my mother to press her project upon Umphray Spurway in her own manner, which doubtless she did with all success; for there was nothing then or ever that Umphray would not do to pleasure my mother.

But when I came in again, I said to her, “Mother, what ails you at little Anna Mark? Why do you not like her?”

It was surely a simple question enough, yet must my mother fall a-trembling and look at me with a pale and perturbed countenance.

“Listen, Philip,” she said. “I have had enough of this little Anna Mark. Ever since you went to the Miln House it has been ‘little Anna Mark’ this and ‘little Anna Mark’ that as often as you come back. And when Umphray—Master Spurway, I mean—comes in to drink his dish of tea it is little Anna all over again. And a wildeat madam at the best, I warrant, to be growing up alone among men there in that mill-house.”

“Why, mother, they all love her,” said I, to try her. “Umphray himself——”

But at this she stamped her foot. “I will hear nothing more concerning the minx, neither now nor again!” she said; and so went up into her own chamber, slamming the door after her.

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Then when she had forgotten her strange sudden angers, I asked her again, "But, mother, if you are so set against our little Anna, why is it that you desire her to come hither and be with me in one house?"

"I desire the thing itself not greatly," said my mother, "but indeed one cannot see the girl being brought up like a heathen among a lot of men, and for a guardian and companion having only that great soft-heart of an Umphray Spurway."

This was knocking down my two idols at one blow, so I made answer: "Why, mother, what has Umphray done that you have grown to dislike him? I am sure he is ever fond enough of you."

Whereat my mother dashed her hand to her brow, pretending that her hair was falling over her eyes (which it was not, nor ever could).

"I mislike none," she said, "but I cannot bear to see silliness. And in this Umphray has been monstrously foolish from the beginning."

I knew when it was time to stop, so I said no more at that time. But, as may be supposed, I thought much about the matter, and the more I thought the less could I see light. Finally, I judged that it must be on account of her mother, who had been sent away across the seas to the Carolinas, that my mother hated little Anna. It could not be that she was jealous of a girl like her living in one house with Umphray Spurway, a man who was old enough to be her father. No, indeed, that was clean impossible.

But when next I saw Anna I got a still greater surprise. The manner of it was as follows. I was going one morning to the grammar school of Nicholas Kidston in Abercairn, with my books in a strap under my arm, when I met William Bowman riding into the town. At

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this I was most mightily rejoiced, and, throwing my books hastily under a bench in a cobbler's shop where I was acquainted, I ran after him.

"Let me up before you on your beast," I cried.

"I will do better than that for you, Philip," he replied. "I will give you the beast itself for the day, if you like to risk it—that is, if you are not afraid of the master's birch for truancy to-morrow morning."

"Umph—Nicholas Kidston, indeed! I dare him to meddle me," I made answer. "I care so little for him that I will ride past the school door."

And indeed I had feared my schoolmaster once for all the day when first I went to school, by drawing a dirk on him when he bade me untruss. That and the name of my famous (or infamous) father did the business. I was no more in terror of my instructor. But this I did not tell to my mother.

So without further thought of my schooling I accompanied Will to his stable at the King's Arms in the High Street of Abercairn. As we went he told me his business.

"I am going on board a snow to examine bills of lading with the captain. He is from Hull with a cargo of looms and foreign yarns. The customs themselves will take a full day. Then there are his charges and allowances to be gone over. Now I was bid to tell you that little Anna Mark would gladly fence you for a silver dollar at the back of the Miln House, and that Umphray Spurway would be all day wool buying at Moreham Fair. You can put two and two together, I hope."

Will Bowman kept his countenance as he spoke. Indeed, it sounded very like a trysting of lad and lass. But neither Anna nor I thought at all of that. We were excellent comrades, that was all. But, neverthe-

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less, I longed to see her, and I did not believe that she could fence me. Indeed I chuckled to myself, for I had been taking lessons in the art from one Sergeant Robert Jack, sometime of Buchan's foot, but who, as he put it himself, had been promoted for drunkenness, and was now living in taverns and passing himself off as a veteran of the wars.

It was (as I have elsewhere said) a good twelve miles by the ordinary well-trodden roads to New Milns, but there was a pass or slip through the hills behind Abercairn, by which the distance was no more than seven, a good hour's ride only to one that knew the paths. So when Will had baited his horse and rested him half an hour, I got across the saddle and rode out of the town by devious ways, so that my mother would not hear of my unlicensed evasion.

It was not my habit to go home to dinner, for which, indeed, there was no time, my mother's house lying at the far-end of the town from the grammar school of Nicholas Kidston. So the day was mine own till bedtime.

In little more than an hour I found myself at New Milns; for as soon as the beast got his head homeward, there was no need of whip or spur. Comrade, pasture, manger—or perhaps simply the desire for home—pulled the rein, so that presently the great square of Umphray Spurway's mill lay beneath me, and there, by the mill-wheel (as Will had said), was little Anna Mark. At sight of her I could hardly get my steed quick enough into the stable, and called on Robin Green to take the care of the beast off my hands. I wanted greatly to run to my comrade, to tread my old well-remembered pastures, and to forget all in the clean downward thresh of the water from the mill-wheel, the singing of the weir,

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and little Anna's voice scolding me for minding her foolish message and coming at all.

Now if anyone thinks this is going to turn out a love tale, she is grievously mistaken. For indeed Anna and I were far above that kind of thing.

On the contrary, we did nothing but spar and taunt one another, and for a long time there was scarce a civil word spoken between us. But this cat-and-dog ren-countering I need not write down, though I can remember it well enough.

But the serious part I will write. And in the after-
come that proved grave enough for us both.

It was not our custom to shake hands when we met, much less—but of that we had not so much as thought at that time. Not I, at least.

So little Anna and I sat down on the broad wooden edge of the pool below the mill-wheel, the same into which the man had fallen the night of the attack. Here we swung our legs and watched the minnows circling calmly in the cool amber backwash, till at a certain point they dived heels-over-head under the impetuous down-rush of the mill-stream, were tumbled deep in the brown turmoil of the pool, and after a time emerged beaten and breathless in the shallows once more. It seemed so good to be a fish and wear no clothes on such a day; for it had grown hot as I rode over the hills, and down in the sheltered valley there was not a breath of air stirring.

“How will you like it,” I said, “when you come to Abercairn to live with my mother? There are no weirs to sing, no pools to dabble your feet in there, excepting salt-water ones out among the dulse and the sand-jumpers.”

“I might like it well enough,” she replied, very composedly, “only I am not coming to Abercairn to live with you, or your mother either.”

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I could not conceal my astonishment.

“But,” I remonstrated, “I know it has been settled so; for I heard my mother persuade Umphray Spurway to it.”

“Oh!” she made answer, without looking at me; “so your mother persuaded Umphray to it against his will, did she?”

“Certainly, little Anna,” I made answer. “I heard it with my own ears.”

“Through the key-hole, I suppose?” she said scornfully. But as that was her manner I paid no heed. (It was true, all the same.)

“Well,” she went on, “it will surprise you to hear that I am not coming to Abercairn. I do not propose to exchange a house where I am welcome for one where I am not. Besides, my father has come back to this country. And I am not going to Abercairn to be snapped off in some foreign ship to help Saul Mark at his dice tables or to mind his monkey in the sleeping-booth.”

Both these things came like a thunderclap on me. Anna Mark would not come to us; her father was back in Scotland.

And now—so curious is the heart of a boy—hitherto I had cared little or nothing hitherto about Anna coming to our house in the Vennel, save to consider how she would agree with my mother, and how late the pair of us would be allowed to play on the quay. But now, so soon as I knew that she would not come, I was in a mighty taking to make her promise—nay, even to take her back with me there and then upon the beast I had left in the stable.

“You would go to school in Abercairn,” I urged, “and learn those things which—which lasses ought to

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learn. For, you know, after all, you *are* a lassie. You cannot change that!”

“Yes,” she answered with great scorn, turning up her nose, “I am a lassie. And because I do not wear knee-breeches I must forsooth sit all day stitching at a sampler—so fine: ‘great A, plain; great B, plain; little B; flourished B; Anna Mark, Her Sampler. Be a Good Girl and you Will Succeed in Life and Be a Nuisance to All your Loving Friends’! No, I thank you, Philip Stansfield; I would rather a thousand times go help my father with his *cartes* and his monkey!”

Of course her father possessed no monkey. It was only a manner of speaking the girl had.

So we talked and talked, nor did we make any better of it. Anna would not come to be pressed in a mould like a jelly. She could not be fitted to Mistress Priscilla Allan’s set of ladylike manners. The day might indeed come when my mother would put her out of the mill-house, but that day had not come yet.

At this last insinuation I fired up, and asked her what she meant by speaking so of my mother—that my mother was a good woman, as she ought to know.

Which was true enough, but I had not learned then that the best of women are not always fair to one another, especially when the same number of years which will bring one of them to nineteen will land the other at forty.

So Anna and I swung our legs and talked, while the sun mounted higher and higher, till we were almost out of the shade of the great beech which grew over the lade.

“Now come to single-stick in the wool-shed,” she cried, suddenly starting up, “and I will make you all over blue marks to carry back to Abercairn. It will

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save Dominie Nicholas the trouble of birching you to-morrow.'"

I was about to consent, when a pair of shadows fell across the pool. We looked up, and lo! there, on the opposite bank, stood—her father Saul Mark and my own Uncle John.

CHAPTER XIX

SIR HARRY MORGAN'S TREASURE

AT sight of these two I started to my feet and made as if I would escape. But the men stood looking at us with such kindly and smiling countenances that my suspicions were allayed, the more so that little Anna sat still where she was, pulling the tart herb called "soo-rocks" from the moist crevices and calmly crunching the stalks between her small white teeth.

"This, then, is his grandfather's heir—a fine lad!" said Saul Mark after a while.

"And this your daughter?" inquired my uncle, turning to his companion like one who seeks confirmation rather than like one who asks a question.

"How is it, Philip," he went on, "that we see you so seldom at the Great House, which in a manner belongs to you? That is not well done to your grandmother."

"I am at school, uncle," I said, not knowing well what else to say.

"So I see," said he, smiling over at little Anna Mark; "it is a pleasant sort of tutelage; I myself have learnt much at just such an academy."

That was the way my Uncle John talked ever, not speaking plain, but in long lawyer's words, and mostly with some other meaning than that which appeared on the surface.

"You were about to play single-stick, I think," said

Saul Mark; "I used to play myself. Will you have a bout with me, Anna?"

"Agreed!" said his daughter, rising quickly and leading the way past the mill-house to the wool-room. As he entered I saw Saul Mark glance around as if to verify a description.

"Master Umphray is perchance not at home to-day?" he said.

"No," said Anna in answer, "but here are half a hundred weavers all busy with their looms."

And she opened a door into the weaving-room, where were a crowd of men and the creaking clatter of many looms and shuttles. Then Anna went and found the single-sticks, and she and her father fell to. Saul Mark had been the finest player on Glasgow Green on the eve of Saint John (which is their head-night for these ploys in the West). But now he had grown a little stiff, and it was not long, whether by accident or intent on his part, before Anna got within his guard and cracked his crown, so that a thin thread of scarlet trickled down his brow.

He flung down the stick smiling, and mopping his head.

"First blood!" he said. "I did not think that the day would ever come when a girl could crack the pate of Saul Mark. Master John, do you try her."

But my uncle declined, saying that he was a man of peace, and that combats of wit were all that were allowed to gentlemen of the long robe. So Saul Mark bade me take the stick, which when I had done Anna and I played a very fast bout as was our wont, the sallow man with the rings in his ears applauding every good and clever stroke. We did not spare each other, she and I, and when a halt was called we were both out of breath, but Anna manifestly the victor.

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“ Good schooling! ” said Saul Mark, nodding his head.

“ Scottish courtship! ” echoed Mr. John Stansfield, smiling, for which I did not thank him. And at his jest Anna cast the sticks on a shelf and turned haughtily away.

The two men did not stay long at the mill-house after this, being, as I think, apprehensive lest Umphray Spurway would return. And so Anna and I were once more left to ourselves. We watched them going slowly and in deep converse across the fields towards the Great House of New Milns.

Anna looked long after them under her hand.

“ We are quaintly fitted in the matter of fathers, you and I, Philip,” she said, with a strange look on her face. I thought she was going to add, “ and mothers ”; but she did not. Indeed, I know not whether she even remembered her own mother, or whether any had ever spoken to her of Janet Mark, the Carolina slave.

“ Now, you will have a bite of dinner, and be going on your way,” she said. “ With so many loving friends in the neighbourhood you cannot be too soon within the Vennel Port of Abercairn. I did wrong to bring you here.”

But with one thing and another it was after six-of-the-clock when I took my beast from Robin Green and cried a last good-bye to my comrade. She stood by the white-thorn tree at the gable-end, and the westerly sun was rosy on her face. There was a dancing light in the eyes which smiled upon me, though her mouth was grave. I did not offer even to take her hand, which was a regret to me afterwards.

So in this fashion I rode away from the door of the Miln House, which I loved so well, and from Anna Mark, my dear companion and playmate of many years.

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I had mastered the steep of the hill, and was making my way quickly through the perilous bypaths when night fell. I would not admit that I was frightened, but yet I confess I drew a long breath when at last, like a grey sheet hung midway the sky, unspotted and unwrinkled, the sea broke upon my vision through a gap in the hills.

After this the night fell sharply and the dusk seemed almost to speed eastward like a swift-footed runner, as a purple clond edged with a rim of living gold rose, towered and crenellated, shutting out the sunset glow.

It chanced that I was passing a little darksome loaning which leads down to a lonely grange house called The Hermitage, when I heard the sound of horses' feet. I turned apprehensively in my saddle, or rather in Will Bowman's saddle. I could see a dusky shape wheel into the main road behind me. The shape seemed familiar, and a spasm of fear took hold on me. I put my finger into my waist-coat pocket, where (a foolish boy's trick) I carried a pinch or two of powder loose, as another might carry snuff. Then I took out the pistol Anna Mark had pressed upon me, one that had been left behind on the night of the attack, silver-mounted, and a gentlemanly weapon, though without crest or device. With the pinch of powder I primed and cocked it, and was just setting it in the holster again when a voice said at my left hand, "So you are a soldier already. You travel armed, I see—a very excellent habit in these uncertain times."

The speaker was Saul Mark, habited in a long cloak of black, and wearing a hat with a feather. He was mounted on the very grey horse my father used to ride in the old days before my grandfather's death.

Whereupon, being glad of companionship, I told Saul Mark how I had come by the weapon, and he was inter-

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ested beyond measure to hear of the attack and all that concerned it. I told him also of little Anna's bravery, and how she had delivered me from the dead man come alive again.

"Ah, lad," he said, "you have in you the true stuff for adventure. I can see that. 'Tis the greater pity that soon you will be a rich man, and never know the sweets of travel, save in a coach and four as it were, or live to see stranger places than the cities between here and London."

I told him that, on the contrary, I had a natural inclination for the sea (which indeed most boys have till they are sea-sick), and that I hoped to enter His Majesty's navy and help to fight the French.

"That is good enough," he said gravely, "but there is better."

Then at once was I all agog to know what could be better or more adventurous than fighting the French in the King's Navy.

He leaned towards me a little as I gaped open-mouthed at him from the back of my jogging beast.

"Did you ever hear of Sir Harry Morgan?"

"No," I answered, much taken down by my ignorance; "who might he be?"

"He was a great buccaneer," he answered in a hushed tone. "Harry Morgan took Panama and many fine cities, and was a terror to the Spaniards all his days."

"But there are no buccaneers now," I said; "and if there were, how am I to find them?"

"It is called privateering now," he said; "but it brings in the moidores and pieces-of-eight just the same."

I was eager to hear more, but he seemed all at once to wax mightily reticent, which made me just so much the

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keener. So we rode silent to the gate of the city. Then he seemed to take a sudden resolution.

"I will tell him," he murmured loud enough for me to hear. "I care not what the captain says."

He turned to me.

"Master Philip," he said, "if you are man to come with me to-night for half an hour, I will show you such a sight as no lad of your age in broad Scotland has seen. I have here in this town of Abercairn the treasure of Sir Henry Morgan the buccaneer, the spoil of a score of plundered cities. It is waiting safe transport across the North Water to Amsterdam, where the diamonds and precious stones are to be cut and reset. There are gold pieces of every tribe and denomination, arms and armour of all sorts, swords and daggers by the hundred, Indian dresses, bows and arrows, chain-mail, and leather-fringed costumes made for great Peruvian Incas. Many of these are of little value," he added softly. "I know not but that the captain might permit me to give you one or two of them to take home to your mother."

"Who is the captain?" I said. "I cannot go unless I know where I am going."

"Oh," said my companion lightly, "first take your horse to stable. He will not be needed to-night, and then come with me. You will surely not be afraid to go to the house of the chief magistrate of this city. He it is who is our receiver and supercargo. Besides, you can bring your pistol."

It seemed to me impossible that there could be the least danger in accompanying Saul Mark to the house of Provost Gregory Partan, shipowner and merchant of the town of Abercairn. And the thought of the suits of armour, the damascened swords, and above all the Indian bows and arrows tempted me beyond the power of

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words to express. I thought that if I could only show myself to little Anna Mark in the costume of an Indian brave with feather plume, bow-and-arrow, and tomahawk all complete, there would be nothing more in all the world left to live for.

So right hastily I stabled my horse at the King's Arms, without waiting to inquire whether Will Bowman had returned or not. Saul Mark awaited me at the door.

"Follow me," he said, "and remember, be silent. This is a secret we tell to but few. And there is a company of horse quartered in the town."

We went down the High Street to the house of that surpassingly dounce man Mr. Gregory Partan, shipmaster and merchant. My guide passed quickly to a side door under a low-browed arch which opened at the gable-end of the Provost's house. He knocked twice.

After a moment the door was opened an inch, and I heard the rattle of a chain.

"Who's there?" said a voice.

"A friend to see Harry Morgan's treasure," said Saul Mark.

"His name?"

"Master Philip Stansfield the Younger, whose mother lives in the Vennel."

"A decent woman," said a voice; "let him come in and see the treasure."

I recognised the Provost's voice. I had heard it often enough on the quay upraised in chaffering and badinage with the sailors and master-mariners, of whom he had ever a number about him. So I felt safe, and my ideas of Saul Mark were much altered by the deference which I heard so important a man pay to him.

"Now, quiet!" he said, "give me your hand. The first part of the way is dark."

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I followed him down a long passage, still further down a flight of steps, and finally we stood on a hard floor of crumbly stone which rang hollow under foot.

"Wait a moment here till I get a light," said my guide. He let go my hand, and left me standing there in the midst. The next moment a heavy door clanged behind him, and I heard the sound of shooting bolts.

"Saul—Saul Mark," I cried, "where are you? Let me out! Let me out!"

For now it came to me that I had been tricked. I called on the Provost till I was hoarse. I shouted entreaties, reproaches, threatenings. I felt all round the walls, bruising my hands as I did so. They were of stone and solid, yet with a curious crumbly, dryish feeling of grit everywhere. My prison house appeared to come to a point over my head. The iron door at the side by which I had entered was now blocked up by stones like the rest and quite indistinguishable.

The Egyptian dark of the place could be felt lying like a weight on the eyelids. Exhausted and desperate, I sat me down on the cold stone floor and wept.

CHAPTER XX

ON THE TRAIL OF THE HUNTER

Now I must go back to where I left little Anna Mark. And full time too, for such a numbskull as I had proved myself to be, hath occupied the tale long enough. I will relate what happened to her, for I have reason to know it as well as if it had happened to myself—or, in fact, fully better.

I left Anna, as all may remember, by the westerly gable of Umphray Spurway's house of New Milns when, in the evening sunshine, I rode away over the hills well enough conceited with myself, which is no unusual habit of mind in sixteen when it hath spent an hour or two in the company of an honest young lass.

Well, as I say, I left Anna standing under the flowering thorn which Umphray had fetched all the way from Yorkshire—why, no one exactly knew. It may be that one like it grew in his mother's garden on the edge of the wold, or, perhaps, once on a time he too had left a young maiden standing under the white May and smiling even as Anna had now smiled upon me.

Anna Mark stood a while looking after me under her hand, and I, for very pride of my horsemanship and the straightness of my back, did not turn round in the saddle. Then, since William Bowman was in Abercain and Umphray himself not yet home, she went off to the ordering of domestic matters in the Miln House, and to see that the foremen weavers shut and barred all

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the doors properly, for in this matter Umphray Spurway trusted her wholly, as indeed well he might.

And while she was within doors the sun began to sink, and the coolness of evening to come up out of the ground. By-and-by Anna went out to the hillside pastures at the back to find Joey Forgan, the herd boy of the Miln, who ought to have had the cows home by that time. She was promising to herself what she would certainly do to Joey when she caught him. Walking with the swing I knew so well, and whistling like a lintie, she sped swift and light over the bent. But all suddenly she saw that which made her stop stock-still one moment and the next drop out of sight into a copse of tall broom.

The heather grows low down on the hills above Umphray's, those same purple hills I had ridden into half an hour before. The gorse and whin-bloom reach up the burn sides to meet it, and all about there is scattered a tangled bewilderment of rocky knolls and great grey stones as big as cot houses. Anna Mark was turning the corner of one of these huge boulders when a couple of score of yards beneath her she saw two men speaking together like folk who have secrets to hide. One, the smaller and more thickly set, was Saul Mark, her own father. The other was a much taller, more commanding man, in a laced coat, which, though he stood in the shadow, glittered in the bright reflection from the western sky. It was of pale blue cloth, and the braiding was of no pattern which bespoke a soldier of the king. Saul Mark was standing with his hat off before the man in the blue coat and listening with an air of much respect. The latter appeared to be giving certain orders, for as he finished speaking, Anna saw her father salute, and presently mount the horse whose bridle-rein had been passed

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through his arm. He rode off as hard as he could go in the direction of the Tinkler's Slap, the nearest pass through the hills to the town of Abercairn.

The tall swarthy man stood a while looking after him, and then turning abruptly on his heel he strode past the broom-bush in which Anna was hidden, so closely that she could feel the ground shake with his heavy tread as he went.

Then it came into her head that Saul Mark, her father, had been ordered to ride after me for some purpose of immediate treachery. She remembered the look on her father's face as he had watched us across the little linn of Kirkconnel that very afternoon, and do what she would, she could not get the sense of impending danger out of her mind.

Anna looked about for Joey and the New Milns kye. She could see the last of them passing in through the great gate and a couple of weavers standing on either side to make all fast so soon as they were safe. Then there came to the girl one of those quick impulses which, far more than ordered and reasonable resolves, rule and order women's conduct.

Anna resolved to follow her father through the hill-gaps, to find out for what purpose he had ridden off so hotly upon my trail, and who the tall man might be whose orders he had taken like a servitor standing in the presence of his master. All which indeed she achieved before the night was out, though not, perhaps, in the fashion she anticipated.

Now, with Anna to think was simultaneously to act, which circumstance made her exceedingly dangerous at fencing and the single-stick play. So it chanced that as Saul Mark rode northward by the Tinkler's Slap to intercept me, he had, all unawares, a long limber slip

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of a girl tracking like a sleuth-hound hard upon his trail. For the first part of her pursuit, it was not difficult to keep her father in sight. He did not ride well, but rather with the seaman's roll and lack of both comfort and elegance in the saddle. Besides, the pass was difficult enough even for a good horseman and in the daytime. What it was to Saul Mark in the grey deeps of the gloaming, only Saul himself knew, and so far he has kept his council. But to Anna all this was child's play. She had wandered on the hills with Muckle Saunders MacMillan, till she could run as lightfoot over the heather and morass as one of his scouring colliers. The mirkest moorland night was to her as the day, being, as I often cast up to her, eyed like a cat.

And so while Saul Mark was every moment gripping and slackening his beast's rein, and cursing under his breath each time it stumbled, Anna was watching each movement with eyes which could distinguish the twinkle of the wide silver earrings in his ears every time his beast plunged over a mossy boulder or wandered aside out of the fairway of that perilous and breakneck path.

When at last Saul debouched upon me at the meeting of the hill-roads on the brae-face overlooking the twinkling lights of Abercairn, Anna was not a hundred yards in our rear. Yet such was the resolution of her heart that she did not betray herself either then or afterwards. Such a lass as little Anna Mark there was not in broad Scotland—no, nor ever will be. That heart of hers beat as steady and true between the instant jaws of death as when she sat in Moreham kirk listening to the minister's sermon. And always, come stress or casement, the merry eyes of laughter or the grinning sockets of Death himself, her brain abode under her broad white brow as cool and unruffled as beneath some

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overhanging rock in the forest you may find in summer heats the caller water of a crystal well.

So it chanced that while Saul the father played me for one silly gull, gorging me with the bait of lies, which I swallowed greedy-tooth, hook and all, his daughter Anna played him for another, and from a safe distance kept us both under observation.

And had she been left to herself, there is little doubt that she would have prevented all the evils which followed. But as ill chance would have it, not a score of yards from the entrance of the town, who should come across her but Will Bowman. He had been walking with his arm about a girl's waist, more for something to do than for any pleasure there might be in courting the not too impervious damsels of the town of Abercairn. But at the sight of little Anna with kilted coats linking it through the busy streets, Will dropped his companion's arm incontinent and took after her as hard as he could go. He thought it was likely that Anna had come over the hills with me to look for Umphray Spurway, and he knew that it would not make for peace if she should seek him where he was to be found at that moment—that is, to be plain, in the little house by the Vennel corner, where he sat sipping his glass and devouring my mother with his eyes, for all the world as if she had been made of barley-sugar.

So on the slanted shoulder of the girl as she went up the lighted street of Abercairn at a harvester's trot, fell the hand of Will Bowman.

“Anna,” he said, breathlessly, “what in the world of sin are you doing so far from home? You that should be in your warm bed behind barred doors in the house of New Milns?”

She tried to escape from his restraint, but Will's

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hand was overstrong. She never could turn him about her little finger as she did me—aye, and for the matter of that, Umphray Spurway also.

“Let me go—let me go, Will Bowman!” she gasped. “Do not hinder me. It is a matter of life and death. I am following Philip and my father.”

“Your father?” repeated Will after her, speaking like a man in a maze.

“Yes; let me go. Or, better still, come along with me. They passed up this street a moment ago, and we will lose them if we are not quick!”

But it was not in Will Bowman’s power on this occasion to be quick. Beauty scorned was upon him. The lady whose arm he had so unceremoniously dropped happened to be a certain Tib Rorrison, who earned her daily bread in the fish trade of Abercairn. Now, why fish-dealing should produce in women a certain rough readiness of wit and raspiness of tongue, is not perfectly clear. But the fact itself could not be doubted while Tib was explaining to Will and little Anna what she thought of them.

“Ye menseless landward-bred hound!” she cried, shaking her red fist, solid as a quarter of mutton, a bare inch under Will’s nose, “ken ye so little o’ Isobel Rorrison that ye wad daur to mistryst her, to tak’ up wi’ a silly partan o’ a bairn like this? And you, Mistress Babbyclouts, that thinks wi’ thae winkin’ een o’ yours to tak’ Tib Rorrison’s lad frae her on the High Street o’ Aibercairn—for a bodle I wad tear the bonny face o’ ye, till it is a’ rig-and-fur* like a new-ploughed field. Aye, an’ Tib wad do it too—were it not that skelpin’ wad fit ye better, ye pennyworth o’ whitey-broon thread tied in a wisp!

* *i.e.*, ridge and furrow.

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“Na, an’ I’ll no stand oot o’ your road, Will Crack-tryst! And I’ll no haud my impident tongue. What care I if a’ the toon kens? What business had ye to speer me oot to walk to Lucky Bodden’s booth wi’ ye, to partake o’ spiced gingerbread and fardin’ saveloys, forbye the best o’ tippenny ale? Aye, lasses, that did he, the deceivin’ thief, an’ he shallna leave thae plainstances he is standin’ on till he has treated no only me, Tib Rorrison, but every ither honest lad and lass within hearin’ o’ the soond o’ my voice!”

“That’s richt, Tib! Gie him his kail through the reek!” chorssed the crowd, “gar him scunner, the blake! Tear the e’en oot o’ the wee besom that garred him lichtly you!”

“Faith wad I, gin it were me, the randy that she is!”

“Aye an’ me!”

“A herd lass, nocht better!”

“If Tib has ony spunk in her ava’, she’ll never stand the like o’ that.”

Such were the interruptions, all obviously provocative, which reached the ear of the already sufficiently militant lady, Mistress Isobel Rorrison, as she squared her arms akimbo, and strode up so close to Anna Mark that, even in the dusky flare of the torches from the booths, Anna could see the red of her weather-beaten complexion, netted and marly like the reticulations on a bladder. A fire was beginning to burn in Anna’s eye, and her hand stole down towards the dirk she carried in the satchel pocket under her skirt. But Will noted the signs of coming trouble, and putting his hand into his pocket he drew out half a dozen silver coins and held them out to Tib.

“There,” he said, “I will stand treat. This is my master’s daughter and she is seeking him ower late to

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be left on the street of Abercairn by hersel'. 'Tak' the siller, Tib, and bear nae malice. And the next time I come to Abercairn I swear ye shall hae Lucky Bodden's candy-stall, stool and a', gin ye like."

Tib, though considerably mollified, would not at once give in, being in the presence of so many witnesses.

"Gie your dirty siller to wha ye like, Will Bowman," she cried, changing her ground, "when Tib Rorrison sets tryst wi' a lad, it's neither for the sake o' siller nor yet tippenny ale, I wad hae ye ken!"

Will, anxious to be out of the crowd, looked about for some one he knew. He espied the hostler from the King's Arms.

"Hey, Jock Pettigrew, ye are no sae prood as Tib. Here's five silver shillings, sterling money. Gang doon to Lucky's and treat every lad and lass that will follow ye, giein' Tib first choice o' the saveloys. Guid nicht, Tib! Eat your fill and dinna bear malice!"

And so under cover of the cheering and back-clapping, Will and Anna escaped down the High Street of Abercairn.

CHAPTER XXI

PROVOST GREGORY PARTAN

BUT by this time it was too late. All trace of Saul Mark and his companion was gone completely. There only remained to visit the King's Arms to see if any had noticed in what direction I had departed. But though Will's horse was duly in stall, neither landlord nor hostler could be seen. And the King's Arms Close was bare as the palm of a man's hand.

And now what to do? Anna was crying by this time, the tears rolling unchecked down her face even as they passed the flaring resin torches of the booths which, like swallows' nests monstrous and foul, were plastered about the walls of the Great Kirk.

They would go to the little house on the Vennel. It was just possible I might have gone directly home. But even in that moment Anna rebelled against meeting my mother. So that even then the two women most concerned about my safety, my mother and my—comrade, would have nothing to say to each other. Anna Mark, therefore, abode without and at a distance, while Will Bowman bent his head to the lighted window, but could see nothing.

"Do you hear Philip's voice, Will?" whispered Anna from the dusk of a close across the narrow causeway.

"Nay," said Will, bending yet closer, "but I hear a man speak within!"

Little Anna Mark could guess who, and a scornful

smile, which, however, none could see, passed over her face.

“Umphray Spurway has come back!” whispered Will Bowman. “I can hear his Yorkshire burr!”

“Knock on the door, Will, and let us tell him all!”

“He will break my head for giving him the horse, and Philip’s, when he catches him, for bringing you hither!”

“Nay,” the answer came clear across the Vennel, “what are broken heads at worst? And, besides, Philip cares nothing about me, or he would have gone straight home to his mother as I bade him.”

Will Bowman stalked boldly to the little door in the corner house which gives anglewise upon the quay beneath. He knocked, and after a long pause there ensued the soft gritting of iron on iron. Then came the rattle and jar of a door which has been opened upon the chain. Which was my mother’s ordinary method, ever since the face of her husband had looked in upon her through the open window of the Yett Cottage in the wood of New Milns.

“I am William Bowman, servant to Master Spurway of New Milns, madam,” Anna could hear Will saying in reply to a question from behind the chained door. “I am anxious about your son Philip. He entered the town at dusk upon a horse, and hath not been seen since. I came to know if he has returned home.”

Then came the sound of heavy steps upon a flagged floor, the rasp and tinkle of a dropped chain, and the light about the door, instead of being a mere three-sided crack, became a broad oblong, till the whole space was again filled up by the giant figure of Umphray Spurway.

So sudden was the apparition, that though he had expected his master’s presence, Will gave back a step.

LITTLE ANNA MARK

Umphray Spurway had a way when disturbed of boxing the ears of a servant who annoyed him, and that without examination or discussion—a habit which enabled him to preserve excellent discipline, though it sometimes led to momentary injustice. And Umphray Spurway's hand was no feather-bolster.

“What do you here, Will?” his voice rumbled across the narrow street. Anna's heart beat and she would have run to him, but for the knowledge that “that woman” was peeping timidly past his shoulder.

Then Will went over the history of the day as it was known to him, Umphray standing glooming in the doorway with the warm and lighted house-kitchen behind him, and my mother's knitting lying where it had dropped on the clean-swept hearth.

At every mention of my being lost, my mother uttered a little moan of apprehension. For ever since the Yett House, terror sat night and day contiguous to her heart. At the third repetition, Umphray Spurway turned him about swiftly.

“Mary,” he said, “do not fear. I will bring the lad back to you if he be in this town!”

And he wheeled into the house again to get his broad-brimmed unplumed hat.

“Shut the door behind us, Mary,” he said; “open it to none. And keep your heart up. This is but some boyish ploy of Philip's, for which I will tan his ill-conditioned hide.”

“Nay, nay, not if you love me,” said my mother through the door; “promise you will not, for my sake. It is all Philip's high spirit!”

“High devil's tricks,” Umphray growled, under his breath. “Such high spirits are best moderated with a rope's end! Bide within, Mary, and do as I bid you!”

PROVOST GREGORY PARTAN

By this time Umphray had found his ordinary way with all men to serve him best with my mother also. For she loved masterful men (as indeed most women do), and naturally obeyed them.

So out into the mild star-sown clarity of the night Umphray Spurway came. And as soon as Anna heard the chain rattle back to its place behind the door of the little corner house in the Vennel, she ran lightly to Umphray and clasped him exultingly by the arm.

“Anna!” he cried in great astonishment, stopping at the edge of the quay, “what in heaven’s name do you in this place at such an hour?” And he turned the girl about with her face to a lighted window that he might see what was in her mind.

Then, in hasty broken sentences, the girl told him all the tale that has been told already—of my uncle John, of Saul Mark, of the bout at single-stick, and of the tracking of her father across the hill, finishing with her own meeting with Will, and how the two of them had lost their quarry at the outer port of the town.

Umphray Spurway went on stroking his beard as he listened. The masts of the ships stood up black into the sky, a star greater or smaller sitting upon the top of each. The surface of the harbour swayed and dimpled, tremulous star-dust sown broadcast across it. Little Anna had never seen the like, and even in the turmoil of her spirit it came to her with a kind of shock that she was in another world, where her acquired cleverness of the woods and hillsides was of no use to her. The creaking of mast-tackle, the groaning of main-braces, a boatswain’s piercing whistle, the clear notes of a ship’s bell stricken somewhere out in the dark over the water—all were wonderful enough to the girl, and remained with her all her life—as impressions and cir-

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cumstances, however trivial in themselves, are wont to do which coincide with some supreme moment.

Now it chanced that, even as these three, Anna, Will, and Mr. Spurway, stood thus on the quay of Abercairn, and while Umphray rubbed his chin with his fingers, that a couple of men strolled down the fairway, if such the narrow path could be called which led between the gables of the seaward houses and the ranged barrels and cooper's staves upon the quay.

One of these was large and portly of body, with an outline in the region of the stomach which obscured both the head and the tail lights of a ship anchored out in the bay. He wore a great hat tucked up with a silver buckle at the side, while his well-fed pursy face, twinkling eyes, and short thick legs that hardly passed each other in walking, informed all concerned that Provost Gregory Partan was seeing to the safety and prosperity of the town of which he was at once the most distinguished ornament and chief ruler.

His companion on the right was of another mould ; a thickset dark man, wearing a hat of foreign make pulled low over his eyes. And as he went, large silver rings, as wide as crown pieces, glinted in his ears. At sight of him Anna Mark grasped the arm of Umphray Spurway.

"Look—look !" she whispered, "there is my father. Ask him where Philip is."

The two men were walking arm in arm, and presently, stumbling over a cast, the Provost swerved a little to the left to avoid the piled confusion of the quay, and, as he did so, he noted Umphray Spurway standing by the corner of the street with his companions a little behind him in the dusk of the wall.

"A braw and balmy nicht," he said, making his magisterial salutation, which was always considered to

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be of super-excellent dignity. "Ah! good Master Spurway, what gives us poor folk of Abercairn the pleasure (and I may add honour) of your company? But I forgot—yes, yes, I have heard there is an attraction at the foot of the Vennel that robes us in a worthiness not our own. A dainty slip of a widow, Master Spurway, or, rather, when I think of it, scarcely a widow, but if one may say so without offence, so much the more taking on that account!"

"Not even you, Provost Partan, can say such things without offence," returned Umphray very gravely, while Anna shrank deeper into the dusk of a doorway, and Will Bowman spread his master's coat-tails abroad to shield the girl from her father's eyes.

"No offence, man—no offence at all!" replied the Provost amicably; "surely we have kenned ane anither weel enouch this score o' years that I may take the freedom o' a jest wi' you, Umphray, my friend?"

"I have been seeking a lad of the name of Philip Stausfield," said Mr. Spurway, without continuing the subject; "he was last seen in the company of your companion, Mr. Saul Mark. Perhaps he can give us some information as to the boy's present whereabouts!"

"My companion," cried the Provost, scandalised; "nae, nae companion o' mine. Saul Mark is just the supercargo o' a bit boatie that rins to Bordeaux wi' oor Abercairn staples—thread, baith black, white, and whitey-broon, birk pirns to wind it on, and your ain manufacture o' braidclath—whilk, gin I may say sae, has made us famous through a' the land o' France."

"Of what ship is Saul Mark the supercargo?" asked Umphray.

The Provost tilted his broad hat a little to the side as he slowly and meditatively scratched his head.

LITTLE ANNA MARK

“The name o’ the boat?” he answered. “Dod—I canna juist bring it to mind at this present moment.” (Here he glanced cautiously over his shoulder.) “Ye see, there’s the trip back frae Bordeaux, and though of coorse she comes in ballast, pavin’ stanes an’ gun-flints maistly, there’s whiles odd things get stowed awa—sic as ankers o’ brandy, wee barrels o’ the fine clairy wine, tobacco that will mak’ the noblest snecshan in the worl’ (wull ye try ma boxie? It’s o’ the best. Na, weel than!), and maybes a warp or twa o’ Valenceens lace. A’ hairmless eneuch, but no to be spoken aboot as loud as guid Maister Ebenezer preaches in the Muckle Kirk. Ye tak’ me! I, Gregory Partan, am the chief magistrate o’ this ceety, and as sic a law-abidin’ man. But—thae ill-set customs’ duties are neither house-dues nor town-dues, nor yet for the common guid. They are nocht but a sendin’ awa’ o’ coined siller oot o’ the municipality. And I dinna hand wi’ them ava!”

In this fashion, and at considerable length, the Provost expounded his theory of the several incidence of imperial and local taxation, to all which Umphray Spurway listened impatiently enough.

“But, Provost,” he broke in as soon as opportunity allowed, “this lad was seen to enter the town with Saul Mark, and we mean to find where he is concealed, in which we ask for your magisterial assistance. If he be on shipboard we must go there and recover him. Philip Stansfield is the heir to a large and important property, and is, indeed, a ward of the Master of Stair, the King’s own Advocate himself.”

“Forbye,” said the Provost, coming over and pinching Mr. Spurway’s arm jocosely, “the only son o’ his mither—and her a weedow—or the next thing to it!”

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“The name of the man’s ship, if you please, Provost!” said Umphray in a curt tone. He was getting angry, and began to suspect that the Provost was merely putting him off.

The Provost shook his great head, removed his hat, and wiped the brim meditatively with his cuff.

“Na, Maister Spurway, try as I wull, I canna call it to mind. My memory is no what it was. But I ken a better way o’t. The man shall tell ye himsel’. Saul!” (he put his hands to his mouth and made a trumpet of them), “Saul Mark! come hither, man. Umphray Spurway has lost ane o’ his bairns and wants to ken gin ye hae him in your tail pooch!”

But by this time, Saul Mark had disappeared among the tumbled casks and cordage piled upon the quay. They could see nothing but the masts standing thick against the sky, and even the light of the stars was dimmed by clouds which began to bear up on the land wind.

“Saul!—Saul Mark!—come hither and speak with Master Spurway!”

The bass bull’s thunder of the Provost’s summons seemed to wake most of the sea-front. Doors opened and shut. There ensued a noise of men moving cautiously in dark places. Lanterns gleamed a moment and were gone. The sound of oars came up from the water, together with a muttered curse as somebody at the bottom of the rude stone steps fell inward into a boat with a clatter and a barked shin. The surface of the bay was stirred into phosphorescence by the regular dip of oar blades, and then dulled again, as little flurries and catspaws began to ripple the dark water into a thousand wavering diamond points. Then, passing through the masts with a sharp *flick-flick* of cordage,

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they sped away over the town of Abercairn towards the unseen hills where the sheep lay out among the heather.

“Na,” said the Provost, “I’m dootfu’ Saul’s gane on. His time is unco precious, ye understan’! A supercargo in a Bordeaux ship has nae siny-cure. A richt honest lad, Saul—will render ye a reckoning to the value o’ a bawbee. Meddles a wee over muckle wi’ the cartes and the dice, says you. But that’s neither here nor there when every penny o’ the profit o’ your venture is clinkit doon on the nail!”

“I must pursue my search alone then, Provost, if you cannot assist me,” broke in Umphray Spurway, for the notion that he was being played with to put off time was now almost a certainty.

“Hoot awa’,” cried the Provost, genially; “the nicht’s young yet. I warrant the young vaigabond is off to see the lasses. He will be turnin’ oot some ragin’ gallivantin’ birkie like the daddie o’ him. Ye will find him hame at his mither’s hearthstane by this time, I’se warrant. It’s juist no possible that a muckle lad-die like that can be lost in this decent, law-abidin’, God-fearin’ toon o’ Abercairn, and that under the provostship o’ Gregory Partan, merchant and shipowner there!”

“I can wait no longer. I bid you good night, sir,” cried Umphray Spurway, saluting the magistrate and moving on. So the three searchers left the provost of Abercairn standing on the quay with his hands behind his back. He watched them go, with his fingers netted in front of him and his thumbs running races after each other like a puppy chasing its tail. A curious light twinkled in his small shrewd eyes as they followed the three till the darkness swallowed them up.

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“Aye, aye—umpha—aye, guid Maister Englishman,” he meditated, “ye think yoursel’ desperate clever. But it will be mony a lang day and short nicht afore ye can discover your weedow’s ae son in my auld lime-kiln. Faith, my daddie kenned what he was aboot when he contrived the bonny slidin’ door that ye micht seek for a’ your life an’ no find, and then biggit a store-room to cover a’ snugly. Dean o’ Guild he was, and a maister mason, though he never raise to be Provost like me ! He intended the auld hole-in-the-wa’ to be filled wi’ Low Country lace, French brandy, and whatever the King’s officers micht lay the duty on. But he kenned naething o’ a bonnier traffic and a mair profitable. Gregory Partan, twa or three cargoes like the last and ye are a made man ! Ye may retire and buy a landed estate. Then the King will gie ye a title for your vailable services to the guid toon. Sir Gregory Partan—Sir Gregory Partan ! What think ye ’o that ?—Sir Gregory !”

But though the hour was late and even the change-houses and drinking-booths along the sea-front were disgorging their noisy occupants on the street, Provost Gregory still paced up and down among the cordage and barrel staves humming softly to himself :

*“ Heard ye e’er o’ the Bailie o’ Mickleham’s coo ?
Her face it was basont,¹ and black was her moo—
For milk or for butter her match I ne’er knew,
This basont-faced, ring-straiokit sonsy auld coo ! ”*

And as he hummed, the Provost’s small and wary eye was turned every way in succession, and he cocked his ear at every sound. Presently the regular dip of oars came to him across the harbour. At the distance of a hundred yards from the land a light was waved three

¹ “ Basont,” *i.e.* dappled with white.

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times horizontal-wise, and then after a pause once up and down. The Provost moved nearer to the steps and leaned against a stone post grooved and smooth with the friction of ships' hawsers. A muttered order made him incline his ear. He heard beneath him the grating sound of a boat's gunwale, an oath, and then the dull rumble of oars softly shipped and the scuffle of men fending off with the palms of their hands.

A head popped up cautiously over the quay edge. A mouth whistled the first line of the tune the Provost had just been humming to himself :

“ Heard ye e'er o' the Bailie o' Mickleham's coo ? ”

The Provost from behind the stone pillar responded with a flute-like second line :

“ Her face it was basont, and black was her moo ! ”

From where he stood the Provost of Abercairn could see the stern of the boat black against the softly heaving phosphorescence of the inner harbour. For an easterly wind had been filling the water with jelly-fish till the nearer deeps appeared to pulse with a shredded silver light, now black as night, again soft and lawny like moonlight filtered through mist.

The men were scrambling out of the boat, and ascending the steps one after the other. The Provost moved nearer the verge. The owner of the black head which had emitted the whistle projected his whole body above the stone parapet.

“ Is all safe ? ” he whispered, as he erected himself.

“ It is,” answered the Provost.

“ Where is the Englishman now ? ”

The Provost silently indicated the direction in which Umphray Spurway had taken his departure. The door of a change-house in Ship Row opened. A broad beam

of light crossed the quay and momentarily illuminated the group of dark figures and the massive form of the Provost. The heads of the new-comers were mostly tied up in coloured handkerchiefs, and in the ears of the whistler twinkled softly a pair of large silver rings.

"Will he have the bulk of the money on him, think you?" whispered the ringleader.

"God forbid that I should ken ocht aboot that," said the Provost quickly; "I hae neither airt nor pairt in your unholy ploys. Business is business, but Gregory Partan is nae highway robber."

This he said indignantly. Then he paused a moment and added in a thoughtful, musing tone as if to himself:

"But yet I seena where he could hae left it. He has been in nae hoose in Abercairn except that o' Mistress Stansfield in the Vennel, and it's no like that he wad trust sic a great sum to a woman! Na, he will cairry it aboot wi' him. Aye, aye, umpha—it's mair nor likely!"

"Thank you. We must be off," said Saul Mark. "Any orders, Provost?"

"When is 'he' to be aboard?" asked the Provost, going a step nearer the supercargo.

"By twelve o' the clock at latest," said Saul succinctly; "we sail with the morning tide, full to the hatches with the bonny young twa-legged cattle."

"And a fine riddance it will be to the toon o' Abercairn, forbye some siller in my pooch, gin the Lord grant ye success and a guid market on the ither side the water. But mind ye, keep within the law—keep within the law. And be preparit to render a strict accoont o' every head amang them, either in yellow guineas or the best Virginian tobacco. Are ye to tak' the boy on board wi' ye the nicht?"

LITTLE ANNA MARK

“Aye, an’ the lassie too, if we have luck.”

“What lassie?” the Provost turned quickly. “I thocht that it was a strict rule that there should be naething o’ that kind!”

Saul Mark laughed an ugly little laugh.

“Surely you have forgotten the heart of a parent, and you a man with a family! Provost, I mean my own daughter Anna.”

“God!” gasped the Provost, “ye are never siccan a deevil incarnate as to sell your ain flesh and blood?”

“And what for no?” returned the supercargo; “is it not done every day? Did not you yourself give your daughter Elspeth to the drunken lawyer Kirkup for gettin’ ye the toon parks in lease perpetual?”

The Provost did not answer the taunt. He kept on muttering to himself and shaking his head.

“I canna allow that—I winna hae that on a ship o’ mine. A risk in the way o’ business or the blinkin’ o’ an e’e for a certain profit, I will undertake wi’ ony man. I will gang as far as it is in mortal man to gang—accordin’ to my conscience that is. But to sell ane’s flesh and blood——”

“‘Apprentice’ is the word, Provost,” said Saul Mark, smiling; “but you hinder us. Rest assured the girl is safe with me. We will find her very useful after she is snugly settled. I will put her into good training on the other side. Besides, you know, she will be near her mother! And in the meantime she will serve to civilise us aboard the *Corramantee*. God knows we need it.”

“And what will ‘he’ say to a woman on board?” Saul Mark chuckled as he replied.

“‘He,’ as you call him, is a fury and all of a fine captain,” said Saul. “But—well, Saul Mark is supercargo of the *Corramantee*, and the entire cargo is his

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business. Bear that in mind, Provost ! Now, lads, bend your stiff shellbacks. On hands and knees till we are clear of these accursed lights ! Good night to you, Provost."

And, like the coils of a great serpent, one pair of bowed shoulders after another passed Gregory Partan as he stood there leaning on the grooved stone pillar, till full twenty men had gone by ; and, save for the scraping of cutlass sheaths against the piled barrels and the gleam of a distant light dimly reflected on a pistol butt, there was nothing to tell that a score of the most desperate ruffians in the world was abroad in the streets of Abercairn.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SUPERCARGO OF THE "CORRAMANTEE"

IN the narrowest part of the alley which wound its way past the gable of Gregory Partan's property, Umphray Spurway was groping with his lantern in his hand. A noisesome place it was in the daytime, gloomy even in mid June, with its slanted bars of light and its deep shadows, where low and villainously browed doorways opened off into the unknown. At night it became a mere pit of darkness, avoided by man and dreamed of as a standing horror by women and children ; for it was reputed haunted by crouching malignant fiends and nameless horrors among all the superstitious of Abercairn. Strange sounds came up out of its deep throat ! Lights had been seen by scudding night-wanderers flickering far down it, like will-o'-the-wisps in the marshes.

But Umphray Spurway was not the man to be intimidated by bairnly dreads or old wives' tales. In the course of his search for me, he had obtained a lantern at the King's Arms by the simple process of going into the stable and lighting it with his tinder-box ; and now, with a spare candle in his pocket, he was systematically searching every corner of the town of Abercairn to which by any chance I, Philip Stansfield the Younger, might have wandered.

As he passed up the High Street he kept close to the houses on one side, flashing his lantern this way and that as if he were sweeping the uneven causeway with a

broom of light. On many unholy and unbeautiful things did that feeble illumination fall. But it was Anna Mark who obtained the first clue; for, like a roving free lance, the girl went peering and trying back from side to side of the narrow street, doubling and twisting as a scent-dog does on a mixed trail.

At the very entering in of Partan’s Close she lifted a riding-switch of willow, or, as it is called in these parts, “saugh wand.”

“See!” she cried, “he has been here. This proves it. I cut this with my own gully knife on the banks of the Linn of Kirkconnel this very day at four o’ the clock. See, there is where the gully slipped and nearly whanged my finger off.”

She handed the switch to Umphray Spurway, who examined it with much interest. Will Bowman also bent over it.

“It certainly looks as if you might be right,” said Umphray; “but, after all, one cannot be certain. There are a thousand ‘saugh’ bushes betwixt Abercairn and the Linn of Kirkeconnel. And, besides, any knife may slip.”

“That is the wand I gave into Philip’s fingers as he rode away, scolding him that he had spent over much time with me already, and warning him to ride like ‘muirburn’ before a following wind.”

Anna Mark spoke positively. She was not a girl to have doubts when she made up her mind.

“Well,” said Umphray Spurway, “beggars must not be choosers. It is a poor clue, but the only one we can find. Here goes to examine the Provost’s Close. “Ugh”—(he sniffed)—“the filthy pigs. These shore folk never clean anything till they have laired themselves to the eyes in muck!”

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He took his way down the alley, thrusting his lantern out in front of him, and feeling the clammy sides with his unoccupied hand till he came to a locked door.

"Bide where you are, Anna," he called back; "and you, Will, look to her. It is fair wading here. What's that?"

"Help!" It was Will Bowman's voice.

"Father, let me go!" This time it was Anna's, but strangely muffled.

"Umphray Spurway, help! They are choking me!"

The great Englishman turned and drew his sword. He ran back along the narrow three-foot-wide passage, thrusting his lantern before him, and, almost before he was aware, touched the black muzzles of half a dozen muskets which with one accord were pointed at his breast. But, nothing daunted, he lifted his sword, and would have driven on furiously into their midst.

"Stand there!—on your life—or we fire!"

It was Saul Mark who spoke. He stood behind those of his men whose guns held Umphray Spurway trapped in the narrow pen of the Provost's Close.

"Surrender, Umphray Spurway, or you are a dead man," continued Saul Mark, "and deliver up the money you carry in the pocket-book in your breast. Quick, too; we have no time to waste!"

"I will surrender to no man!" cried Umphray. "Will, cry the alarm. Knock upon the Provost's door!"

"Your 'Will' is provided for. He will give us no more trouble!" retorted Saul Mark fiercely. "Nor will you, Master Spurway, if you delay another minute."

"Then I will cry the alarm myself!"

He lifted up his mighty voice so that it shook the

sleeping town till the burgesses trembled in their beds.

“Help there! Murder!—black murder!”

“Front rank, make ready to fire. Scipio, cut the prisoners’ throats if he shouts again. Now, Umphray Spurway, will you surrender, or will you die?”

The great Englishman was not yet conquered.

“For me,” he said, “I would rather die than yield to any tallow-faced sea-swab alive. I will fight any man of you with any weapon you like to name.”

“Fighting for honour is not our business. Our business is to have your money, and get aboard. Now, I give you thirty seconds; and if you will not deliver it, by the Lord I will kill the lad and the girl before your eyes!”

“Mercy of God, man, she is your own daughter!”

“The more reason then that I should do what I like with my own. Now, you are wasting time. Will you give up the money and submit? Half a minute from now, Scipio. Count the seconds.”

A rich oleaginous voice in the background, with a sea swing in it like the overword of a chantey, began to count, “One, one—one—one—one—— Two, two—two—two—two—— Three, three—three—three—three!” And so on through the numerals, each set of repetitions telling off a second as nearly as might be.

Umphray Spurway hung a moment in the wind, doubtful whether even yet to make a rush for it. Instead, he elevated his lantern, and its light fell on Anna Mark, helpless in the arms of a gigantic black, whose great palm was pressed against the girl’s mouth. It was this man who was counting the seconds in a monotonous sing-song, and swaying from side to side as he did so. Behind him Umphray caught a glimpse

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of a couple of dark-skinned ruffians stuffing a gag into Will Bowman's open mouth, while other two held him pinioned by either arm.

Umphray was a brave man, but he knew when to give in.

"Enough," he said ; "I surrender !"

"Pass over the money then !" ordered Saul Mark shortly.

The Englishman took a shagreen pocket-book out of his coat, and slipped the leather strap over the levelled mouth of the nearest musket. The owner reached it back as a haymaker lifts hay on a fork. Saul Mark opened it promptly.

"Here bos'n, the dark lantern ! Let the glim fall on this !" he said ; and, with quick and methodical accuracy, he checked the amount, nodding his head as he did so with a satisfied air.

"It is as well for you, Umphray Spurway," he said as he buckled it up, "that you have not tried to play with us. Now, right-about-face ! Put your hands behind you. Take three steps backward ! Halt ! Bos'n, tie the gentleman up !"

CHAPTER XXIII

JACOB AND ESAU

“WILL you let the boy and girl go?” said Umphray, when he had obeyed, which he did without murmuring, knowing that with such desperate ruffians there was nothing else to be done.

“The girl is my daughter,” said Saul Mark; “you have too long separated parent and child. I am sure your warm and generous heart will take pleasure in having brought about so happy a reunion. I am infinitely obliged to you for your care of Anna. But now I will relieve you of your guardianship. Indeed, the girl wishes it herself, do you not, my daughter?”

Anna struggled vehemently in the clutches of the black Colossus who held her, but only one muffled inaudible sound escaped from under the great palm.

“You hear?” said Saul Mark, smiling, “she cannot even express her joy.”

“You are a devil!” cried Umphray, indignantly. “Listen—take my life and let the girl go!”

Saul Mark laughed aloud.

“That would be neither profitable nor yet a Christian act. It is true, you cannot go back to your mill till after you have remained a little while in a secluded spot. But we are not murderers. Besides, we want you to go and weave us more money than this paltry sum you have paid us on account. Do not imagine that this pays back the blood-money you owe us for Dominie

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Ringrose's life. His death we will require at your hands and at those of this brave young man here, whose fame is so great in all the countryside."

He turned about to Will as he spoke.

"Ah, sirrah," he said with a deep sneer, "you are but an apprentice, but for all that you will pay. Oh, yes, you also will help to settle the blood-debt. Blood for blood shall you pay. Drop for drop. Agony for agony, till every jot and tittle be redeemed."

To all which, wisely enough, Will Bowman answered nothing. For the fellows who held him on either side threatened him with knives if he tried to speak. By this time they had tied up Umphray Spurway as he stood with his back to Saul Mark and his men, in the narrow gullet of the Provost's Close.

"Now," said Saul, "it remains that so bold a seeker should be taught how to find."

He passed Umphray by, and taking the lantern which had fallen to the ground, he followed the darksome passage to its end. Here he unlocked a door under an archway, the same by which some hours before I had descended to view the treasure of Sir Harry Morgan.

"Bring him along, three of you!" Saul cried back, "the rest lie snug! Now, Umphray Spurway, bend your head if you wish your brains to remain in their case. Follow me along the passage, and at the end you shall find safe and sound that for which you have searched in vain all this night."

It was at the same moment of time that I started up from the dusty floor of the deserted lime-kiln, a wild hope that I was to be delivered singing in my heart. I heard voices, footsteps, the tramp of men approaching. Fear and hope laid alternate hand on me. The low door, which I had not been able to find in the dark,

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showed itself plainly enough now, light darting from the keyhole and flashing all round the ill-fitting edges.¹

The door opened. A tall, broad-shouldered figure filled all the doorway. I was found—I was delivered.

“Umphray Spurway!” I cried, and sprang towards him.

“My poor boy,” he said, “I can do nothing for you. I also am a captive in cruel hands.”

“What!” I cried; “you a prisoner?” For I had deemed such a thing impossible.

Then appeared Saul Mark carrying the lantern and three other men behind him, none of whom I had ever seen, all with weapons in their hands. I could now see the Englishman’s wrists tied behind him.

“Now, Master Philip,” began Saul Mark, “I promised you that you should see Sir Harry Morgan’s treasure. It was necessary to try your courage first. Now, since that is proven, I shall keep my word. Harry Morgan’s treasure you shall see, and that in the best of company. Moreover, you shall have a chance to gain some of it in the same way he did—or thereabouts. You are going seafaring, Philip, my lad, and I fear me your kit is something of the shortest. But this your benefactor will supply. Put your hand into his pocket and see what you find.”

“I will never rob Mr. Spurway!” I said, blinking as boldly as I could at the man with the silver rings in his ears. He was still smiling the little contemptuous smile which I hated so.

¹ I found afterwards, that the reason I could not discover this door in the dark was because the inner side of it, that towards me, had been purposely faced with lime, roughened on the surface and made to adhere firmly with plasterer’s hair.

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“What do you say to that, Master Spurway?” As he spoke he turned to the Englishman.

“Philip,” said Umphray, kindly, not answering him directly but speaking to me, “do as you are bid. Put your hand into my pocket and take what you find there. It is all yours.”

“I thought so,” cried Saul, with simulated enthusiasm, “I knew it—spoken like a generous Yorkshireman! You are going to a far country, lad. You will need all you can get to make a figure there. So do not spare to take advantage of this your benefactor’s kindness.”

Then, seeing that it was useless to do otherwise, and since he himself bade me, I put my hand reluctantly enough into Mr. Spurway’s pockets one by one, and drew out from his coat-tails a snuff-box of gold set with pearls and a silk kerchief of fine material. Out of the other came a little red-bound Prayer Book; which struck me as strange, for Umphray was never known to be pious, or even so much as to cross a kirk door.

“I will relieve you of that snuff-box, Philip,” said Saul Mark; “it is a habit most foul, and one that growing boys will do well not to acquire.” And he held out his hand for the box.

For a moment I hesitated, and the next Saul’s voice changed from suavity into a perfect gust of ferocity.

“Ship’s manners!” he cried. “Learn to obey! Not at once, but a long mile ahead of that. After you have been a month on the *Corramantee* with the captain on board, you will learn to obey before, not after, you are spoken to!”

Startled almost out of my judgment, I handed him the box.

“Now proceed with your inventory, and make haste!”

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I cannot keep my lads here all night waiting on your fumbling !”

Then I took from my friend's breeches' pocket his tobacco-pipe in its silver case. The stem unscrewed into two pieces, and the bowl was larger than common. After that came his tobacco-box and tinder. These also Saul Mark took from me on the same pretext, and handed to the seamen behind him. I never saw them again. Mr. Spurway's keys he permitted me to put back into his pocket, saying that as he was to return to the mill-house and weave more money for them he had better have no more difficulties than were necessary put in his way. Next came his purse, which the supercargo bade me put in my own pocket “for the present.” Then I was commanded to search the pockets in his waistcoat, to take the watch and seals out of his fob, and to put my hand into his breast, from which, though I knew it not, he had himself already taken out the pocket-book. As I did this last I came upon something small and oval hidden deep within, and each time my hand passed across it I could feel him wince. From this I judged that Umphray desired, above all the rest, to retain the article, whatever it might be. So of course I passed it by.

So busy was I at this work that I did not hear the sound of feet along the passage, nor anyone ascending the steps which led into my dungeon.

“What is this?” said a voice that sounded in my ears like the trump of doom ; “ungrateful young tiger-cat, is he robbing his benefactor, his foster-parent ? We must teach him better manners on the *Corramantee* !”

I turned me about, and there, taller than any other by a head (except Umphray Spurway alone), stood my

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father, Philip Stansfield, the condemned parricide, the almost assassin of my mother.

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He was dressed in a handsome gold-laced coat, with epaulets upon his shoulders, and a cocked hat on his head like that worn by high officers of His Majesty's Navy. As ever, he was a man of handsome figure, and carried himself proudly and masterfully.

As he entered Saul Mark stood back, and I could see the sailormen shake with fear. Philip Stansfield strode over to where I stood speechless beside Umphray Spurway.

"A lantern here!" he cried. And when Saul Mark obediently brought it, he put his hand under my chin more gently than I had expected, and fell to perusing my face as though it had been a printed book.

"Humph!" he said shortly, after a pause, and then turned away.

"And now, brave Master Spurway," he went on in another tone, "I hear you have set yourself up on my property as a power in the land. What hinders that I should not stick a knife into you and have you flung over the quay? You hunted me with dogs, did you? You brought the evidence to condemn me to the gallows, did you? Have you gone through him, men? What! my gallant son has already lifted the loot. Well, I am not proud; I will see if there are any leavings."

And with that he strode to where Umphray stood, very grave and quiet, his arms strained behind his back, and began to pass his fingers across his person, seeking for anything that he might have concealed. I could see the Englishman's face wince every time Philip Stansfield's hand went near his breast, where I had felt the little hard oval thing.

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The searcher noted the involuntary movement, and thrust his hand into the inner pocket of his waistcoat, from which he brought out a little miniature on ivory, handsomely set with diamonds. I was standing a little behind, and as Philip Stansfield held it underneath the rays of the lantern I could see it quite plainly within a yard of my eyes.

It was a portrait of my mother !

At this unexpected climax my father laughed a most curious laugh. I never heard but one thing like it in all the world of sound. That was the low growling rumble of boulders grinding against each other in the bed of a flooded river. It was not a loud noise, but there was certainly something appalling about it.

"So," said my father, turning to Umphray Spurway, "it is as I thought, Master Jacob the Supplanter. You have been amusing yourself with Esau's wife, have you ? And that when the poor man was abroad in the desert. Well, Esau has come home again. What have you to say to him ?"

"I have nothing to say to you, Philip Stansfield," said Umphray, very calmly, "save that I cherish for the unfortunate lady who once was your wife a feeling such as your nature could never understand. The picture you hold in your hand I had made privately. She knows nothing of it."

"That will do," said my father shortly. "Concerning my wife I need neither instruction nor information from you. What is between us I can settle for myself. Here, supercargo, take my son and the other prisoners aboard the *Corramantee* immediately !" He turned upon Umphray Spurway. "And now, sir," he said, "be good enough to observe the manifold conve-

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niences of this kiln as an eligible permanent residence. Here" (he pulled away a loose board by a ring) "is a quiet resting-place—deep, you see, and quite unoccupied. There" (pointing to a whitish grey heap in the corner) "is abundance of quicklime, waiting only a can of water to do its duty. I have a knife here, sharp enough to settle all scores with Master Jacob. In the meantime I am a feeling-hearted man. Take your charming miniature to the place you are going to. I do not desire to possess such a constant reminder of past felicity."

He thrust the miniature back into the pocket where he had found it. Umphray stood silent, eyeing his enemy as calmly as though he had been striking a bargain with him in the market-place.

"Bring the boy this way!" said Saul Mark. One of the sailors seized me by the collar and gave me into the grasp of the supercargo.

"Now listen," he said. "If, as you pass through the streets, you speak above a whisper my orders are to throttle you!" And, as a warning, he tightened his fingers on my throat till I gasped for breath. The last I saw of the terrible limekiln behind Provost Gregory Partan's house was my father setting down the lantern on the edge of the yawning grave in which he designed to place the body of my benefactor, Umphray Spurway.

CHAPTER XXIV

DEBTOR AND CREDITOR

PHILIP STANSFIELD stood facing Umphray Spurway in the Provost's limekiln, and this chapter tells the story of what befell between them. The hands of the Englishman were still tied behind his back, and as the last retreating footstep was heard ascending the darksome passage which leads out into Gregory Partan's Close, Captain Philip Stansfield lifted the lantern from the floor on which it had been set and held it to the face of his victim. There was no sign of fear or yielding there, only the Yorkshireman's usual calm mastery over time and circumstance.

"Yes," said Captain Stansfield, "you are a brave man, Umphray Spurway. And only with such would I trouble to deal. I will have a little agreeable conversation with you before we proceed to business. Pray sit down. You will find the edge of the grave very comfortable. You can lean your back against the wall. So! I will content me here by the door."

And so saying, Philip Stansfield seated himself with his shoulders square to the low door which led into the passage behind, and with great care disposed a couple of pistols, one on either side of him, so as to be ready to his hand in case of any attempt at escape.

With equal philosophy the prisoner obeyed. The stone trough (or, as Captain Stansfield called it, grave) was hollowed perhaps as much as four feet in the rock.

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Umphray disposed his great bulk as best he could. He sat down with his feet hanging into the trough, his back leaning against the dusty wall of the kiln, and looked at his enemy with as much nonchalance as if he had been a customer come to buy woven cloth for the English market.

Captain Stansfield opened the catch of the lantern and measured the candle with his eye. Then he pulled a handsome gold watch from his fob and consulted the dial.

“You have, I see, been so considerate as to bring candle for a good couple of hours. I think we can settle all quarrels and sink all differences long ere that, Mr. Spurway. Yet there are a goodly array of both. You have long had the top hold, sir, and now, when it is my turn, I wish you to be certified that with what measure ye have meted, it shall be measured to you again. Aha! Master Englishman, I also am glib at Holy Writ. I was bred on the Catechisms Shorter and Longer. For I was a child of grace, and in my father’s house had many advantages, such as are hidden from your popish and prelatie eyes. Why, can you even certify me that you have within you the very beginning of knowledge? Do you know ‘What is the Chief End of Man’?”

Well enough did Umphray Spurway know the first question and answer of that marvellous collect of doctrine, the Westminster Shorter Catechism. But he judged it useless to make any reply in kind, to the man who had already declared his intention of being his murderer.

So he contented himself with saying, “Sir, I have no regrets for those things which I have done. Nor can anything you may say to me alter my good conscience toward God and man!”

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Captain Stansfield held up his hands in pretended horror.

"Dear, dear," he cried; "I knew well that little was to be expected of a prelatist and malignant! Yet living in a land of gospel privilege and almost within cry of Masters Peden, Renwick, Shields, and their fellows, I had hoped for a humbler spirit. Know you not that 'Who vaunts himself, condemns himself'? But I will try you again—'What is Effectual Calling'?"

Still Umphray Spurway was silent. The Captain leaned forward and took up one of the pistols in his hand, pointing it directly at the Englishman's head.

"I will tell you," he said, "this—is Effectual Calling!"

And he smiled bitterly as he examined the priming.

"'Many are called but few chosen.' Oh, Master Spurway, the benefits of a careful upbringing! My father used to set me pages of the Bible to learn and beat me if I missed so much as one word. Gad! how I remember the stiff-backed chairs and the glazed diamond-paned presses in the study where he kept his rattans. The verses also I remember, though somewhat less distinctly."

"Say what you have to say to me and have done," Umphray Spurway spoke out as though cutting short a loquacious huxter on market day. "Blasphemy is no ornament to any man's conversation!"

Philip Stansfield clapped his hands.

"Spoken this time like Sandy Peden himself, dear Umphray; I do not yet despair of you, when in such short space a little faithful dealing can effectuate so much. Cheered by this, we will now go back upon 'Man's Chief End.' There"—he pointed to the grave on the edge of which Umphray was seated—"whatever learned divines may say, that is 'Man's Chief End.' All the rest is acci-

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dental—this alone essential, inevitable, uncontrovertible—man's chief and only end, as indeed I hope to prove to you long before the dawn."

All this Captain Stansfield uttered, speaking as quietly and reverently as a minister laying out the heads of his discourse to a listening and obedient people. So far as manner went, Mr. John Bell himself could not have spoken with a better grace or a sounder discretion.

"But now, sir, we must to business," he went on in a more natural tone of voice. "I perceive you are weary of my conversation—though I would have you know, sir, that it has been very generally approved by better judges than yourself. But now let us make count and reckoning, draw our bills, and give mutual discharge like two reasonably honest men."

"Most willingly!" said Umphray Spurway, nodding in his turn.

"Against me, then, sir," said the Captain of the *Corramantee*, preparing to check the items upon his fingers, "you have the following; oblige by correcting me if I am wrong:—

Philip Stansfield, Dr., to Umphray Spurway, Cr.

	£	s.	d.
<i>Imprimis</i> , To loss of time hunting the said			
P. S. with intent to kill him	10	0	0
<i>Item</i> , To damage to gates of Miln House clothmill	0	9	6
<i>Item</i> , To three years' loss of society of the said P.			
S.'s wife	0	0	3
<i>The Total reckons</i>	10	9	9

"We will say, in round figures, ten guineas. I am an easy man. And now for the *per contra*:

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Umphray Spurway, Dr., to Philip Stansfield, Cr.

	£	s.	d.
<i>Imprimis</i> , To proving the said P. S. guilty of his father's murder	1,000	0	0
<i>Item</i> , To three months' imprisonment in the Tol-booth of Edinburgh	1,000	0	0
<i>Item</i> , To the death of Dominie Ringrose and XIII. of his servants	1,000	0	0
<i>Item</i> , To alienating the natural affections of his son	1,000	0	0
<i>Item</i> , Ditto of his wife	0	0	1
<i>The Total reckons</i> . . .	4,000	0	1
Balance due by Umphray Spurway to the aforesaid Philip Stansfield, 3,989 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i> "			

Captain Stansfield maintained his grave and practical method of speech through all this enumeration of figures, and at the close he turned to Mr. Spurway, who was listening like a man at a play that does not amuse him.

"Sir," he said, "you owe me a great deal of money, but I will discharge your indebtedness at one stroke. Which do you choose—sword or pistols? The latter is commonly esteemed the easier quittance, and, as I have a pair, it shall be by double entry. Both are equal to me!"

"Philip Stansfield," said Umphray Spurway, "would you slay an innocent man in cold blood?"

"Am I not already loaded in the eyes of all with having already done the like to the father that begat me?" said Philip Stansfield, rising to his feet; "and, besides, what right have you or any man to say that my blood is cold? Devil take you, sir, have you not entrapped my wife's affections that were so precious to me? Have you not made my own son hate me? Have you not chased me with dogs—yes, with bloodhounds upon the king's highway? Answer me these things, sir! And now you prate

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of murder in cold blood, when I do no more than offer you a choice of two perfectly honourable ways of discharging a just debt! I thought that at least you were an honest tradesman, Master Spurway, and knew how to pay those to whom you were indebted."

"I do not choose to bandy words with you, Philip Stansfield," the Englishman replied. "My life is in your hand. If you choose to murder me here and now—well, it is within your power!"

Captain Stansfield looked about the dungeon. The candle was flickering a little, the vents of the lanthorn having guttered up. He took out a pocket-knife and coolly opened them with the lesser blade. Then he shut the little door and put the lanthorn back again on the floor. His eye fell on Umphray's cloak, which Saul Mark had flung down as he entered. The broad soft-brimmed hat was lying beside it. A thought came into his head, and he clapped his palm upon his knee with a loud smack.

"I have it," he said; "this will suit all parties—you, because it will enable you to discharge your obligations, me, because it gives me the opportunity to pay a visit I have too long deferred."

He went over to where Umphray sat, and the brave Englishman made up his mind that his latest hour was come. But Captain Stansfield only thrust his hand again into his breast pocket and drew out the miniature.

"I have changed my mind—I will return this," he said, "to the original. There is a right indefeasibly vested in a husband, to prevent other men carrying about his wife's picture in their bosoms like so many pieces of holy cross. The custom offends alike against religion and morality. I will give this into my wife's hands, and,

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lest I be denied entrance, I will equip me for the purpose."

He drew Umphray's cloak about him and clapped his tall-crowned hat upon his head.

"Thus equipped I need fear no rebuff," he said, smiling. "'Tis a sad confession for the husband of one wife to make, but a man never knows to what ill chance he may come in this world!"

Upon hearing this Umphray Spurway cried out with fear, though hitherto he had been impassive as marble.

"For God's grace, kill me and be done with it," he said; "let your unhappy wife alone. Has she not suffered enough? Kill me, and end this farce!"

Philip Stansfield watched his enemy coolly as he strained and agonised in his bonds.

"Nay," he said, almost gently, "that must not be. For a man of the world, Umphray, your methods are strangely crude. I have a better plan. I will be absent an hour—sixty minutes and no more. I will leave you a pistol by the cheek of the door here. It is loaded and primed. If on my return I observe through the secret spy-hole that you have successfully used it on yourself (I recommend the roof of the mouth myself; it is the most certain, where all are a trifle unpleasant), I promise you that all scores shall on the instant be cleared between us. I will do my wife no hurt. But if not, and your brains are still unscattered, I shall know that you meditate treachery. I will therefore first shoot you through the roof, which has been arranged for such a contingency, and then I will go back and kill—well, you know whom I will kill."

"You are a devil!" cried Umphray Spurway, straining at his bonds till the veins stood out purple on his brow.

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“I am a man of my word,” said Captain Stansfield with his hand on the low iron door of the kiln. “There is the pistol, and beside it a little priming powder. Come hither, if you please, Mr. Umphray Spurway. Stand with your back to the door and I will sever the cord about your hands. Slowly—go very slowly! Do not attempt to turn round, or two things will happen which you would give your life to avert. There!”

With a sharp-edged dagger he severed the rope, and the next moment the iron door clanged and the bolts shot without with a rasping sound. Umphray Spurway flung himself against the aperture, overturning the lantern in his haste. But he might as well have flung himself against the walls of a cavern. The solid masonry and yet more solid metal did not even quiver at the shock. The sudden darkness startled him. How should he have any chance without light? He saw a little red gleam on the floor and a whiff of candle smoke came to his nostrils. He bent down quick, and lo! the candle was between his fingers, the wick still glowing red. It had rolled out of the lantern when he overset it, the door being loose on its hinges.

Umphray blew cautiously yet regularly upon the fading red, and after an anxious moment or two he had the satisfaction of seeing the flame start up again and the candle burn up as bright as ever.

There before him, close by the edge of the wall, was the pistol his enemy had left him to blow his brains out with, and on a torn scrap of the *Caledonian Mercury* a little pinch of black priming powder. Philip Stansfield had been as good as his word.

CHAPTER XXV

HUSBAND AND WIFE

MEANWHILE along the sea front of the town of Abercairn Philip Stansfield, wrapped in Umphray Spurway's cloak, strode fearless and unafraid. A light or two dimpled among the shipping, but being in safe harbourage most watches had taken the ship's lantern below to play cards by, or, being superstitious, to set beside them while they slumbered.

Captain Stansfield did not go directly to my mother's house. Instead, he made for the exact point at which Provost Partan had first paused among the barrels of the quay. But this man did not walk softly and with delicate observance, like that worthy chief magistrate. He rather stamped along, cursing as he stubbed his toe against a hooped cask which had been left sitting on its end behind several larger puncheons. And when at last he came to the edge and heard the sea lapping under him on the quay edge, he did not whisper or whistle "The Bailie of Mickleham's Coo." On the contrary, he called out loudly, like a man in unquestioned authority:

"Is the pirogue there?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the answer from below.

"Is all ready aboard?"

"Aye, sir, all ready to cast off and be over the bar in twenty minutes so soon as you are aboard!"

"Abide then, and be wary," he answered, "I have yet

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one more touch to try ere I come. But I shall be with you in half an hour."

"Aye, aye, captain, we will wait!"

Having settled this matter of discipline and secured his retreat, Philip Stansfield walked briskly eastward. Before him a pale bar of uncoloured light lay across the horizon, outlining the hills higher up the Firth and fading into the upper dark blue in which the thinly sown stars of morning twinkled. This was the yet far-off promise of the day. Captain Stansfield had need of haste. Yet upon the streets of Abercairn he walked with more careless assurance than Gregory Partan himself.

He stopped before that little house at the corner of the Vennel. (It is a change-house now, and I had a glass of very decent Hollands there the last time I was in Abercairn.) He seemed well enough acquainted with the locality. For after standing a while in the shade contemplating the house from the other side of the way, Philip Stansfield stepped across and tossed a handful of pebbles up at a window behind which a dim night-light burned. My poor mother had been back and forth all night long to look for me and perchance also (as I guess) to watch for the return of Umphray Spurway. And so now, rising gladly from the bed upon which, all sleepless, she had cast herself down, she approached the window.

The lattice was ajar that she might the better distinguish the clatter of our returning footsteps. She could hear a voice calling her in a whisper. It made her heart beat—not as young Will Lucy's had done in Great Marlow, but still it beat.

"*Mary!*"

Now, if you have been much about the world and in perilous places, of course it is no news to you that though

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voices differ as much as faces, whispers are all alike and cannot be distinguished in the dark, differing only as lower or louder, harsher or softer.

So when for the second time my poor mother, who knew no harm and thought none, heard the whisper coming up from below—"Mary!"—who can blame her for doing what she did—that is, rising hastily and throwing her little flowered petticoat over her night gear. She ran to the window and there, in the dim filtered light of stars and the lucent reflection from the sea, she saw the long cloak and steeple-crowned old-fashioned hat of Umphray Spurway at the door. Me, whom doubtless she also looked for, she could not see. But she ran gladly enough downstairs to open the door; for she doubted not but that the Englishman had gotten some good news to cheer her heart withal.

Thus at the door of the sheepfold stood the wolf, and the pitiful lamb within ran quickly and joyfully to open to him.

Captain Stansfield, by the whitewashed side of the house, bent his head a little down, listening. He knew that foot. He had listened to it before till he was weary, but his ear caught a gladness and youth in its spring now that had never been there when he knew it.

"Umphray!"—the answering whisper came now from just behind the panel—"Umphray, is that you?"

"Mary!" Still in a whisper.

The chain rattled down, and there in the black of the doorway my mother stood, the night wind blowing her white gear about and the pretty girlish tangle of her hair.

The dark figure wrapped in Umphray Spurway's cloak went past her, and the door was shut. The chain was lifted into place.

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“Wait only a little—there, in the sitting chamber—and I will bring down the light. You can tell me all your good news then! I am sure you have found him—that he is on his way home!”

For, at the sight of Umphray in her house in the dark morning hours, my mother had suddenly grown conscious of her bare feet and disarray.

But she sped her toilet, and came down the stairs anon with a candle in her hand, dimpling and smiling like the girl she hath remained to the last. When she came to the door, and saw it yawn black before her, she felt the heart beat within her again—yet not as one afraid, but rather pleasurably.

Then she entered, crying after her impetuous fashion, “Tell me of the boy—you have found him—you bring news of him——”

And then all suddenly her speech was cut off as the light of the candle fell on the tall dark figure which stood resting an elbow upon the little mantel-board where the pinky foreign shells were. The steeple-crowned hat was thrown upon the table, and the countenance which looked down upon her was not the kind Englishman’s but that of Philip Stansfield, her husband—the face which most of all things in the world she feared.

“What—what—what!” she gasped. And she clutched at a pretty neckerchief of a cherry hue which, with pardonable coquetry, she had fastened about her neck with a little gold brooch wrought in pattern like a bracken leaf. It had a bezil of green stone which Umphray had given her, very precious.

And if Captain Philip Stansfield had not reached his hand across and taken the candle out of her nerveless fingers she would have dropped it to the ground. But he set it quietly on the table beside the pitiful small

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work-basket, with which, indeed, my mother was for ever playing but never completing any great works.

"Sit down, Mary," he said, "and be pleased to compose yourself. If you do not exhibit all the gratitude and joy usually expected from a wife upon her husband's return after a long absence—nevertheless, I am easy, I forgive you. My own behaviour, I fear, gives me no right to be over-rigid. Is that the key of the schnapps cupboard, Mary? It used to hang at your girdle, I remember!"

My poor mother had dropped into a stiff-backed elbow-chair, her lips trying to form prayers to God—but no sound coming from them; and her eyes staring uncomprehendingly at the man who had been her husband and had lain at her side.

He stooped and detached the little square-warded key from the chain, knowing of old the secret of the catch. Then he went to the cupboard in the corner, from which there always came a pleasant smell of ginger spice and honeycomb as often as it was opened.

"Ah!" he cried. "you are as of old, Mary. You keep the bottles well supplied. I hope his taste in Hollands is as good and sound as mine was!"

He took a tall glass, filled and presented it to my mother, who sat twisting her fingers, so fascinated that she could not take her eyes away from his for a moment. So, at least, long afterwards she told me.

"Drink," he bade her. "I have much to say to you which you must hear and answer. And the time is short."

He gave the glass into her fingers, but they shook so that the Hollands was spilled on the floor. Then he filled the glass again with a kind of patience not entirely ill-humoured. Indeed, she owned that his whole de-

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meanour was wonderfully calm for so bad and furious a man.

“Set it on the table,” he said; “do not hurry till you can overmaster your feelings. I own this must have been something of a surprise!”

So saying he turned away, and lifting the curtain which covered the little window from the prying eyes of neighbours, he looked out. He noted how the flush of dawn had begun to spread upwards, and then calmly dropped the blind again.

“Drink it now, Mary!” he said. And with habitual obedience my mother took the glass and sipped at it.

“And I also—after you—to your service, madam, and that we may prove better friends!”

He lifted the glass as high as his head with a gesture not wholly ironical, and drank the raw spirits down like so much spring water.

Then at last my mother’s lips formed the word that had been on them ever since she had seen Philip Stansfield looking down at her from the angle of the mantelshelf.

“You are a murderer!” she whispered hoarsely as if to herself. And again she repeated with yet greater horror on her face, “A murderer.”

Captain Stansfield shrugged his shoulders with the air of one who knows how to pardon the inconsistencies of women.

“I thought, Mary, we had agreed to let bygones be bygones. But since you remind me, I *have* been called by that name—and by others. My own son bore testimony against me—as did also Jacob the Supplanter—I mean your friend, Umphray Spurway the Englishman. Now, I may have been guilty—I may have been innocent—or as it might be, betwixt and between. That I have not,

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for the present, time to argue. At all events, I was a rude man in those days, dazed with strong drink and the lust of the flesh. What I have suffered I blame no man for—except myself. And I forgive all who bore testimony against me—save only Umphray Spurway, with whom I have risked my neck to reckon. And I have reckoned!”

Then again my mother’s lips formed words, spoken hoarsely and with effort, but still intelligible words.

“You have not killed him?” she gasped.

“You plead for him,” he went on, smiling bitterly. “I cannot call to mind that you ever pled for me when I was in greater straits. But—there, that also is a by-gone. Let us be friends, Mary, so far as we can. I have not killed him, and if you will see eye to eye with me, I promise you my hand shall never touch him!”

My poor mother could say no more, but only watched her husband as the mouse may look up at the ravening monster between whose curved claws it lies helpless.

“I have no long time to waste, Mary,” he went on, poising himself easily against the little table, which creaked under his weight; “I must hasten and get aboard. And I hope not alone. *You must come with me, Mary!*”

My mother was not more terrified than before, simply because from his first entry she had touched the ultimate of human fear and horror. He went on:

“That is, I hope to convince you that there are considerations of weight why you should let bygones be bygones and return with me. I will not speak words of love to you. For such, I take it, are over between us, if, indeed, they ever had a beginning. But you are old enough to be governed in your actions by arguments more practical. I desire your company for several reasons. First, because I am not the man I was, and I

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desire to be yet more and better than I am at present. You alone can help me to that.

“Again, and more sordidly, my brother John, Sleekit Jock, hath now the estate, which ought to be our son’s. For fear of his neck he will send me a full half of all his receipts. Hitherto there hath been deducted the portion due to you according to My Lord Advocate Stair’s reading of the law. With that in hand as well as brother John’s moiety, I shall in short space be able to quit my present mode of life, which I grant you is little better than that of a common pirate. But what would you? I was the heir to a large fortune, never checked, never corrected, given the utmost liberty by my father, who went about his business without remarking me, supplied secretly with money by my mother. What marvel if I became as the beasts that perish, if I wallowed in every foul pit and knew it not? The very death of my father was laid to my charge, I say not with what justice. I became a condemned paricide—a felon. My wife never was truly my wife. Alone and desperate in the dark woods I saw her happy in the company of another. I shot at the man and I wounded—you. What wonder that you hate me! I do not blame you. Yet if you will accompany me over seas, you shall have no cause to regret the step. For one thing, you will travel in the company of your son.”

“What?” cried my mother, starting to her feet, “you have not stolen him away?”

“He is on board my ship out there in the bay,” said my father, quietly. “What more fitting than that we three should all seek a new land and a new life together?”

“Oh, cruel—cruel,” moaned my mother, “to take from me my boy—my little lad Philip!”

“I presume even you will admit that he is mine also

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—*my* boy, *my* little lad, and the rest of it,” said Captain Stansfield with some show of justice. “Now, Mary, I put it to you plainly. If you accompany us, your son shall go as an honoured passenger. He will sleep in your cabin if you please. He will dine at my table, and when we arrive in the country to which my thoughts are tending, both you and he shall be handsomely provided for. If not——”

He paused long enough to give my mother time to moan, “What will you do with my boy? You would not kill him?”

“That were equally useless and unprofitable,” said my father. “If you should refuse to accompany me, I would sell him for a slave in the plantations. There are many that would give sixty golden guineas for so handsome a lad!”

“You would not—you could not—such things are not possible!” cried my mother.

“Nevertheless,” continued Captain Stansfield, “they are done. There are a score of younglings out in the ship yonder, who will bring their price when we touch the shores of Carolina, all honestly come by, too, and to be sold for honest gold. It is a lawful trade, winked at by the government and protected by the magistrates.”

“I cannot go—oh, I cannot! Why torture me?” moaned my mother, rocking herself to and fro in her chair.

“I have here something that may prove a more powerful argument with you than the slavery of your son,” he went on with more grimness. “What think you of this pretty thing?”

And he tossed into her lap the miniature of herself which he had taken out of Umphray Spurway’s pocket. At sight of it my mother gave a little shrill cry, knowing

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by instinct whence it had come. For it was a copy of one in her possession which had been lost for a time and then again recovered. Caleb Clinkaberry had averred that he had found it on clearing out the Yett House.

"Whose is this?" she murmured. "I know nothing of this!"

"So he said," my father went on, calmly. "It was taken by the hands of your husband out of the breast of Umphray Spurway. Your conscience can tell you if you know any reason why he should wear against his heart the picture of a married woman. But that skills not now. Suffice it that I have left the man shut up in a safe and secret place not far from here, and that unless you put a covering upon your head and accompany me on board my ship straightway, I will go back and slay this Spurway for the shame he has done mine honour in the person of my wife. I promise it before God!"

"I will come—I will come!" cried my mother. "I will not let my son be sold alone into captivity. I will go with him!"

"How touching is the love of a mother for her only child!" said my father, thrusting the miniature into his pocket and again lifting the blind.

"It is growing light," he said. "Here, Mary, take this cloak. Put the hood over your head and wrap yourself well in it. The air is shrewd and bites. Have you anything you wish to bring? If so, make it into a bundle. I will come and help you. Take few clothes or adornments. There are plenty of both where you are going."

And so, talking all the while and as it were encouraging her, Captain Stansfield made my mother put her necessities together and take her little money out of the

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drawer in the secretaire where it always lay, as he well knew. Lastly, he strode to another cupboard, and there, among old flounces, women's gowns and ancient gear, he found a riding-coat of his own (for women can never suffer to destroy clothing till it falls apart from the moths). He put it on, and the two stole out into the broadening twilight of the new day, my father carrying my mother's bundle under his arm.

It was characteristic of Philip Stansfield that in the streets of the town where his person had once been so well known, and which was now garrisoned by a troop of soldiers, he walked as on his own quarter-deck, his head erect and his hat set upon him with an air. The sourish black look of the hunted man was quite gone, and though the old cruelty leaped up on occasion, yet from this time forth he walked and carried himself with no common nobility.

As they went down the quay my mother said tremblingly, her mind doubtless on the strong place behind her where Umphray Spurway lay concealed: "You have not killed him, Philip?"

And the Christian name, spoken in such a manner and in such circumstances, might well have softened a heart of stone.

"Killed him?" answered my father. "Why should I kill my son?" Though he took her meaning well enough.

"I meant not our son," she pleaded, willing still to mollify him, "but—the man you spoke of—back there in the dungeon!"

"I will not slay him—I will not lay a hand on him. He is safe and well in a cellar which must assuredly be opened during the day. It belongs to a most respectable magistrate of the town who has dealings with us. He

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will assuredly let Umphray Spurway out, and it may be recompense him for any loss."

"This is true—you swear it to me?" said my mother.

"It is true—I swear it!" answered Captain Stansfield. And with this my mother had perforce to be content. But Philip Stansfield said nothing about the dreadful alternative he had placed before the Englishman.

The boat's crew was in waiting, and without further adventure these, these my strangely assorted parents, came on board the slave and pirate ship *Corramantee*, my father carrying my mother's bundle rolled up in a blue handkerchief spotted with white.

CHAPTER XXVI

PROVOST PARTAN VISITS HIS LIMEKILN

PROVOST GREGORY PARTAN had risen betimes in the morning in spite of his late vigil. A man does not carry the burden of a municipality for nothing, and at such a time, when so many rogues were about, it was not Gregory Partan, that faithful magistrate, who would spare himself.

Now I do not know whether you are a connoisseur in smells, as I have the fortune or misfortune to be. But to me every room I was ever in has its own bouquet, just as each flower and the bark of every tree has its particular odour.

That of Gregory Partan's little parlour, where mostly he did his business, was a very peculiar and composite one. I have never met it during all my travels through the countries of the world, save in the houses of the well-to-do town's folk of the trading boroughs in Scotland. It is a scent compound of well-polished antique furniture, tinged with hartshorn or other unguent used upon shining mahogany and rosewood. In this case it was not a close smell of unopened chambers. For at most times the window stood several inches open, propped with a book or the edge of a chance piece of timber picked up upon the quay. A trace of strong waters too, of excellent quality, might have been separated and distinguished by the delicate nostril, and much more than a trace of the leather binding of Gregory Partan's great

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ledgers. These stood on a shelf above the Provost's desk alongside of the official library of his office, the Town Dues book, the Burgh Records, and a large thin octavo bound in curious black leather stamped with an intricate design in gold, which contained the rates charged by the officers of His Majesty's excise upon every dutiable article, from imported heather besoms to foreign-built ships carrying His Majesty's flag.

Here then Provost Partan sat, and in the simplicity of his heart cast up the bills of lading of his latest venture. For the *Corramantee*, described as carrying woollen goods, wines, and spirits to the loyal colonies, belonged wholly to Provost Partan of the town of Abercairn, though one Philip Staunton, master, was entered as owner.

“It's an awesome thing for a Provost an' an elder o' the Kirk to hae to deal wi' blakes an' blackguards. But what can a God-fearin' man do? Siller he maun mak' or he is nocht thoct o' in this land o' gospel privileges. An' there's simply nae siller in the country. Foreign ventures we maun a' try, if we are no to eat yin anither up like minnows in a pond. But, oh, the risk, the risk! Forbye the uncertainty whether ye will ever see hilt or hair o' sic deil's lickpennies again!

“There's mair nor twa thoosand pounds' worth o' guid gunpoother in that ship—twa hunder and saxty casks o' strong speerit (Guid forbid that ony Christen man should pour a drap o't doon his hass!)—forbye guns and whingers an' gully-knives, for the heathen that fear na their Maker to cut yin anither's throats wi'—Heeven send them speed! And a' that gear at the mercy o' a set o' as re-gairdless loons as defile the face o' elay! A' that siller dependin' on siclike waffs and runagates as Philip Stansfield that slaughtered the daddy o' him—or gat the

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blame o't—an' Saul Mark that is as muckle waur than Philip Stansfield as *he* is waur than Gregory Partan! But what a sailor—what a supercargo! He is nae muckle guid at the fechtin', but, oh man! he brings hame siccan a balance-sheet as haesna entered the port for thirty year. How does he manage it? It's maybe safest no speerin', Gregory lad! 'Tak' your gowden guineas, jingle them on the table, see that they arena clippit. But never ask whaur they cam' frae. Na—nor whatna fine ship gaed up wi' the flames mountin' higher than her riggin'. Oh, Gregory Partan, man, gin a' the minister says be true, ye'll hae to answer for this! But there's aye a day for repentance—and I've lang, lang to leeve yet. Hoots—what's a' the fret! Gregory, you and me will juist tak' oor mornin' to fricht awa' sad thochts!"

So saying, the Provost rose and from a recess in the wall concealed cleverly behind the window shutter, he took a square bottle and poured a generous portion of the contents into a dram-glass which also stood in the recess.

"Here's to the lads on the *Corramantee*—a guid delivery, a safe return, *and* a heavy bag when Saul renders his next accoont!"

It was a long toast for so little a glass, but to even things the Provost filled it up again and yet again—till, indeed, the right rubric began to creep back to his pale check and even tinge the lower portion of his magisterial nose. Gregory stood at the window and tasted with lingering relish of palate the excellence of his private store.

"They'll be clear oot twenty guid sea miles by this, and nocht on this side o' Scotland fit to catch them!"

He lifted the bill of lading and glanced down it again. "Private ventures o' the Captain and Supercargo—I hae

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no concern with these. But I had the gatherin' in o' thae orra laddies. That's where the profit comes!

“*Item*—Twenty-seven young lads, all between the ages of eleven years and sixteen years, healthy, strong, willing to be bound apprentice in the Virginia and Carolina plantations—likely to bring 30*l.*–40*l.* apiece, say 900*l.*”

“Gregory Partan, ye are a made man. And doin' a service baith to yoursel', sir, and to the laddies. For what guid wad they hae done here, I wad like to ken, but only run aboot the street and gotten themsel's into mischief? Ye are a public benefactor, Gregory lad, though ye get nae thanks for it. But it's aye some comfort to get in the siller!”

The Provost reached for a large key which hung on a nail above the desk.

“I'll juist tak' a dauner doon to the auld limekiln and see in whatna state thae ill-set loons hae left it. Cleaned wi' besoms and clauts it will need to be after them and their guests! ‘To see the treasure’—ha! ha! Aye, mony is the laddie that has seen Morgan's treasure in my faither's auld limekiln!”

So it chanced that Umphray Spurway, lying with his face down and the pistol clutched stiffly in his right hand as if he had killed himself, heard the sound of heavy footsteps approaching his prison-house. With a hurried intake of the breath he nerved himself for that which was before him. His plan, thought out during the night, was to lie rigid as if dead till his enemy should enter, then he would spring up and take his chance with the pistol. He had waited in vain all night long for the return of Philip Stansfield. Now, his time was at hand.

“‘Heard ye e'er o' the Bailie o' Mickleham's coo?’” hummed the Provost, under the flaps of whose waistcoat

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the choice spirits were pleasantly meandering; “davert—what for hae they steekit a’ the outer bolts? Couldna thay hae been content to lock the door decently to keep stravaigers oot, withoot giein’ a body a’ this trouble?”

“The Bailie o’ Mickleham’s Coo” interrupted itself while the Provost fumbled angrily at the rusty bolts. He had to stoop so low that, to say the least of it, the posture was unpleasant for a man of his figure and undignified in the chief magistrate of so ancient a borough.

But at that moment the door opened and something still more undignified happened. A strong hand gripped Gregory Partan ere he could rise to his feet. A forceful arm dragged him within. The keys were jerked from his hand and he himself thrown into the corner like a bundle of rags, while Umphray Spurway, having secured the door, stood over the Provost pointing the barrel of Captain Stansfield’s pistol between a pair of exceedingly astonished eyes.

At first the eyes of the prisoner, fresh from the Hollands and the glare of the bright morning, were dazzled, and he conceived that his own familiar “blakes and blackguards” had lifted up their heel against him. He had always had an idea that they might hold him to ransom.

“And now, Philip Stansfield,” cried the voice of the angry Englishman, “with the measure you mete it shall be measured to you again. The words are your own. I know not what ill you have said or done to that poor lady your wife. But I do know that you have not five more minutes to live. I will kill you with the very pistol you put into my hands that I might blow my brains out with it. To your prayers, man—that is, if you have still any hope of the mercy of God to a villain such as you are!”

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“What—eh, preserve us! What’s this ava? I’m no Philip Stansfield or ony siccan unworthy vaigabond. I’m honest Gregory Partan, provost o’ this toon, comin’ decently intil my ain cellar, that was my faither’s afore me—honest man, he was Dean o’ Guild in his day, forbye Deacon o’ his craft! An’ an honest man—as I am this day, sae help me the Almiehty Poo’er!”

“Gregory Partan,” cried Umphray Spurway, astonished beyond measure, “what are you doing in this place—where men have been throttled, bound, robbed, and well-nigh done to death? I hold you responsible for all that has been transacted here this night!”

“Umphray Spurway,” cried the Provost, rising to his feet and groping towards the Yorkshireman, “surely ye canna think siccan thoechts o’ me that has been your frien’ ever since ye cam’ to this countryside. Ye maun hae gotten a clour aboot the crown that will hae dung ye silly. But in the name of fortune, what brocht ye here?”

“Let us first get out of this place, and then, when I see daylight, I will reckon with you, Provost Partan!” said Umphray grimly.

“That will we, and blithe,” cried the Provost, cheerily. “I was just comin’ my ways doon to get a lippie or twa o’ Hollands oot o’ a bit corner cupboard I hae here. Gin ye will join me, ye will mak’ me prood.”

“I have work to do that will wait neither bite nor sup,” said Umphray, as he opened the door, and the two men came out into the passage. “I must ask you to lend me your hat—this or another, sir. We will settle the price hereafter. The murderer and parricide, Philip Stansfield, was in this place last night, and he left me to proceed to his wife’s house with the declared intent of committing murder.”

PARTAN VISITS HIS LIMEKILN

“Philip Stansfield in Abercairn—mercy on us! He doesna want the confidence. It is a direct reflection on me, the provost o’ the ceety. I’ll summon the watch. I’ll call oot the train-bands. Dod! I’ll do mair nor that—I’ll come wi’ ye mysel’!”

As they passed through the mahogany-polish-scented study, Gregory Partan took his Sabbath hat off its nail, and the two men made their way rapidly to the little house in the Vennel. All was still and peaceful as they paused in front of the door. The windows were blinded, and a curiously belated air of night and sleep contrasted with the open doors and cheerful lattices on either side, which were crowded with faces interested in the movements of two such notable men.

They went to my mother’s door and tried the latch. It was unlocked, and as they entered and shut it behind them, the night-chill of an unopened house struck cold and heavy upon them. Umphray Spurway strode with fearful heart from room to room. He clambered up the narrow stairs in half a dozen bounds. Before every shut door and black closet he stood gasping with a horrible fear lest he should come suddenly on some sight too ghastly for human eyes. But all above was emptiness and stillness, the dank sweat of night upon everything.

He thundered downstairs again to find the Provost holding a steeple-crowned hat in his hand. He was smiling a little, and seemed about to speak jocosely. But the Provost’s jest, if indeed he had been about to make any, was stricken from his lips at the sight of the dreadful face of Umphray Spurway.

“He has carried her off—the villain. He has captured her son and carried them both to the plantations to sell for slaves!”

“Hoot na,” said the Provost, “ye never can tell—a

woman is aye a woman. 'They're juist terrible forgiein'. I ken by my ain wife! And we a' try them sair. He'll aiblins hae spoken her fair and saft—and she'll hae gane back to her auld love for a' that he is a blackguard——"

"Hold your cursed lying tongue," thundered Umphray, roused out of himself, as the wily provost intended that he should be, "I tell you she hated him—loathed him. Did she not lie weeks in the hospital here from the wound his hand gave her?"

"Aye, aye, they are verra lang sufferin', the weemen," said the Provost calmly, looking about him. "But we will do no guid here. I misdoot that the nest's empty and the bird flown!"

"I tell you, sir, she would never have gone willingly. She must have been forced. I know her heart!"

"Like enuch!" assented the Provost, "but some o' the weemen fowk hae twa sides to their hearts—yin for the auld love and the ither for the new. But they aye keep the warmest for the auld. Tak' my advice an' think nae mair aboot her, Umphray. She maun be gye licht-headed. There's as guid fish——"

But Umphray Spurway was gone. He had fled the ancient and hateful emptiness of the proverb which he knew was coming.

"Hey, mon, leave me my hat, and tak' your ain wi' ye, Umphray!"

But the Englishman only cried over his shoulder impolitely, "To the devil with you and your hat!"

"Aweel," said Gregory philosophically, after minutely examining the steeple-crowned article he held in his hand, "I hae nae objections. There was a bit hole or twa in the croun o' my auld yin, and this is as guid a beaver as was ever coft for siller. Aye, aye! Ech-how, aye—but Providence is aye a kind provider."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "CORRAMANTEE"

WHEN Anna Mark and I found ourselves on board the *Corramantee*, it seemed as if we had been dropped suddenly into another world. The whole affair remains curiously distinct to me. I remember the uneasy feeling of the water as the boat directed her way among the scattered lights of the harbour. Then we were handed up the black side by sailors like so much merchandise. Will Bowman had been left on the quay, gagged and bound, in charge of two men of the crew. I can yet call to mind the partial illumination of Saul Mark's black bushy beard and silver earrings as he sat nursing the lantern in his lap and directing the course of the boat towards the ship. Anna was on one side of him, I on the other, and once for comfort I passed my hand cautiously about his back, hoping to touch Anna's. But instead I must have laid my fingers on Saul Mark's brown paw as he sat controlling the tiller, for he turned upon me with a sharp oath which made me jump.

The deck of the *Corramantee* was a piled confusion of boxes, tarpaulins, coils of rope, mixed with exceedingly solid objects which I suspected to be shrouded cannon. Yet the sailor men knew their way at a run through these obstructions and up among the cordage as well as I did up our garret stairs.

"Follow me, sir!" said Saul Mark as soon as we were

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within the circle of light which came from lamps fixed low behind the bulwarks, so as to shed no light beyond the deck of the ship.

This I essayed to do, and plunged down a dark flight of stairs in imitation of the supercargo's method of descent. My foot slipped and I would have assuredly fallen and broken my neck, if he had not stretched out his hand and grasped me as I fell.

"Get in there," he said, peremptorily, "you will find blankets in the corner. To-morrow we will consider where to bestow you. Anna will come with me to my own cabin!"

So saying, he went out, taking the light with him, and I was left alone in a dark place with the scuttling of innumerable rats all about me. It was infinitely worse than the Provost's limekiln, and had it not been for the thought of Anna on board with me, I think I should have sat down and cried.

As it was, I groped about in every direction till I found that I was in a little wooden cell of some ten feet square, filled mostly with stores and with barrels which were caked all over the side with salt. But in the corner, as Saul Mark had said, I found a mattress made of some sort of foreign fibre, curled as fine as hair, and kept in place by little slats of bamboo on the under side. I came also upon a couple of blankets, which I drew over me with no small thankfulness when I had lain down. For the night was cold, and the place, as it seemed to me then, incredibly damp and musty—though indeed nothing past the ordinary of merchant ships.

"I will not go to sleep," I said to myself; "how do I know that they have not brought me here to murder me?"

Yet I must have slept and that soundly, for it was far

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into the next day before I waked. In my dreams I thought myself back again on the swing under the trees at the gable end of the old Miln House. Anna Mark was swinging me, standing behind and first pulling me higher in one direction, then pushing me forcefully in reverse. At first the movement was pleasant, but afterwards I wished her to stop. Yet for the life of me I could not cry out, till finally I woke in an agony of fear and cold perspiration.

Then instead of the pleasant trees and the rustling leaves, the deep cool ravine, and the soft hushing roar of the weir, I saw only the blackness of darkness. I smelt the dank smells of the ship's belly. I heard only the water slogging against the ship's side. Yet my sensations were real enough. I staggered to my feet, letting the clothes fall away from me, and lo! the first thing I knew was that a bulkhead swung round and struck me on the brow. The next moment I sat down hastily and unpleasantly on the sharp ironbound corner of a box. I was rattled like a pea in a bladder at the end of a boy's stick, so that presently I was glad to succumb again on my blankets, hoping for some surcease of these strange disturbing motions.

It was not the strength so much as the irregularity of these sinkings and insurrections which troubled me. A long upward heave would be followed by a quick drop. Then came a resounding clack as the ship struck what to me seemed a solid rock. Again there would be a rebound and another heave at right angles to the first. Now I appeared to be tossed in a blanket against the ceiling. Anon, having left all my vital parts sticking there above me, I was hurled, a mere empty shell, void of all but misery, into the abyss.

But I need not enlarge. These sensations are com-

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mon to all who go down to the sea in ships. Or, at least, they are the lot of most, and the cruel sport of the few happily immune.

It was high day outside when the door opened and I saw my father stand before me in his blue coat with the gold braid, a sailor behind him in a striped shirt and white trousers, holding a lantern in his hand.

I rose to my feet also, for I did not wish to shame my courage.

"Ah, Philip," he said, "so you have joined the *Corramantee* as a pressed man. You are a brave boy. Come up to breakfast!"

At the very name of food, I could scarce contain myself, so strong a loathing had come over me. I think Captain Stansfield must have noted my pale countenance.

"Why," he said, "you are somewhat squeamish. That happens on a first cruise to the best seamen. Dick, bring him a glass of brandy from my cabin!" Which, when I had drunk, I thanked him for, and felt somewhat better.

But judge what was my astonishment on going into the cabin to find my own dear mother sitting there with her hands on her lap, her lips white, and such a look of fear in her eyes as I had never seen in them since the night at the Yett Cottage of New Milns.

She did not rise, but only held out her poor hands with a little pitiful appeal. I ran to her, and she clasped her arms about my neck. Then, though she had not cried at all before, she now laid her head on my shoulder and wept aloud. So I stood there all a-tremble in my knee-joints. For, what with the uncertainty of the ship, the brandy wambling in my inside, and my mother's head heavy on my shoulder, I thought I should fall down in the place where I stood. Nevertheless, I did not, but

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stood it out, till my poor mother stilled her sobbing and dried her streaming eyes. Yet I think the exercise did her good; and then for a while after she did not say a single word, but alternately touched her eyes with her kerchief and patted my cheek with her thin fingers.

Then presently, the vessel lurching violently to one side, I was thrown on the cushions, and, upon recovering myself, I found myself face to face with Anna Mark, who greeted me with a bright and reassuring smile.

"Anna!" cried I; "it is good to see you, Anna!"

For, indeed, I felt that nothing could long go far amiss where she was. Nay, the very dancing light of mischief in her eyes helped me to be brave. And so it was always. I have in my time set up for a respectably courageous man, but I have never evened myself to Anna Mark.

"Philip," she said, "I have been speaking to your mother. We are friends now."

For this my wondrous lass had instantly assumed the care of our poor mother upon her first coming on board. She had forgotten her own terror in little delicate ministrations to the woman who disliked her. All this was so exactly characteristic of Anna that the tears came into mine own eyes, and I could not even find in me the courtesy to thank her. Not that she thought of that, for it was always a pleasure to her to take the burden of the troubles of others upon her shoulders.

Then came my father in. For he had gone about his business as soon as he had seen my mother lay her head on my shoulder, and heard the first of her clucking sobs. (Shame it is to speak so of my mother, but I must use the word which tells the exactitude of the thing!)

"Mistress Mary," he said, "will you be pleased to

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come on deck? The motion is easier there, and methinks the air will do you good!"

He spoke with a courtesy which was certainly new and wonderful. My mother lifted her head, and answered, "I thank you!" with a little bend of the body which was strange to see. It was taught to all well-bred maids in my mother's time, and was considered of the highest breeding before the invention of the more graceful courtesy of modern times.

And then what a sight I saw! I, a hill-bred boy, whose view of the sea had never been more than might be gotten from a row-boat in a harbour, or a glimpse of the white-dotted plain of the sea from a forth-looking mountain top, saw nothing on every side of me but chasing blue billows, each tipped with white, and far away to the right the loom of the land through the midday heat.

And the *Corramantee*, which last night had been only a turmoil of tortured blackness, was now a beautiful ship, square-rigged before, schooner-rigged aft, with a clean-cut bow, a broadish beam, and a shape that tapered aft. She sat low in the water, leaning over a little in the light wind. Then what a mountain of snowy canvas floated above. How long and beautifully tapering was her mainmast, how staunch and sturdy her bowsprit and foremast! And then the winking brasses, each a new poem! The decks were snowwhite as those of one of His Majesty's ships. For, to do him justice, Provost Gregory had spared no expense on her outfit, and the imperious angers of Captain Stansfield and the seaman-ship of Saul Mark kept all in the primest order.

When the *Corramantee* put into port, as every vessel in the world must sooner or later, all this was changed. The white sails were replaced by others patched and

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brown. The masts were painted to represent worm-eating and dryrot. The fine long guns were shrouded in tarpaulin, with a *débris* of boxes and bales on top scattered every way. The glistening carronades were disguised or trundled out of sight. Nothing save the taut and perfect cordage betrayed to the eye that one of the smartest ships of her size in the world, with as daring a crew as ever trod deck-plank, was lying peacefully at anchor amid a score of as peaceful merchantmen.

These things, of course, I mostly learnt afterwards. For at first I was too much eaten up with anxiety as to our position on board and too much concerned about my mother to ask any unnecessary questions. And, indeed, of incident on our outward cruise there was hardly any.

Once, however, I was on deck when the look-out away up on the high cross-trees cried out something sharply, which the mate, a thick-set surly Scot from Tillicoultry, made him repeat. No sooner had he grasped the purport of the message than he clutched a brass telescope and swung himself up into the shrouds with the agility of a monkey. Then a few moments afterwards Saul Mark and the Captain came on deck. All sail was crowded on, and I shall never forget the look of keen alertness on the men's faces as they crowded forward and gazed across the blue leaping sea towards that unseen something which had been reported on the horizon. For me, I could distinguish nothing save the unstable plain of ocean and the white balancing wings of sea-birds. Then Captain Stansfield, with a gallant air, asked that he might be allowed to escort my mother below; whereupon she took his arm, as doubtless she had done when he had come as a young wooer to her father's manor. Anna Mark ought, of course, to have gone along with her, but with deft

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alacrity the rogue hid herself behind a carronade which still wore its harbour rigging.

As for me, I went forward among the men, and though one of these ordered me below and saw me leave his side of the deck, no further notice was taken of me.

Captain Stansfield and Saul Mark, with Lambie the Tillicoultry mate a little behind them, were on the quarter-deck eagerly examining the chase. I could now see the ship, a huge tower of canvas half sunk under the pale whitish-blue line of the horizon.

She mounted fast and we would soon have overhauled her. But long before I could see anything save the top-masts of the vessel we were in pursuit of, I could hear the man on the look-out calling again and yet again. This time Saul Mark climbed up to the station in the cross-trees with a telescope.

"Four others—five—six," he shouted down. "We are overhauling more every moment. Two are ships of war—British by their rigging!"

My father laughed loudly, and shut up his telescope with a click.

"We are not metal to scratch such a tartar as that. It must be the Jamaica convoy—six ships of war, by gad! And thirty sail of merchantmen!"

Instantly the men relaxed their strained attention, and the course of the ship was changed. The white towers of sail disappeared again over the blue line, or rather sank slowly into it, and we were alone once more in the centre of that tireless circle of sea.

.
All this while the ship was worked as steadily and regularly as Umphray Spurway's mill, as, indeed, Will Bowman often said. Now Will was an active fellow, strong, and quick at learning. Besides, what stood him

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in good stead now, he had been in his youth much among the fishermen of Whitby. So ropes and sea upheavals came easier to him than to me. As much as they would let him, he became one of the crew; and could reef and steer and scramble with any of them—jobs I very literally had no stomach for.

But our chief occupation on board was looking after and cheering the twenty-seven poor boys so cruelly torn from their homes, some entrapped, some cozened, others again plainly stolen away from widowed mothers, who had no means of avenging or even tracing their loss. For the town of Abercairn and its surrounding villages had been swept as a city is sometimes rid of its stray dogs, by these merciless hunters of men.

The poor lads had been carried away, and their fate was to be sold for slaves in the plantations. There were even a few among them, against whose parents certain in high place had grudges. It was no difficult matter to punish such recalcitrants by picking up a son, who in the gloaming of a long summer's day or early winter's afternoon might be running wild at "tig" or "hide and seek" among the barrels of the quay.

Anna, Will, and I had the free entrance of the "bar-racoon" at all times. It was at best a dark evil-smelling hole, as may well be imagined, and the boys left to themselves would speedily have made it a horror and a loathing. But Will and I divided them into watches. We appointed officers to see that cleanliness was enforced with the utmost strictness. We obtained permission to bring the boys up for air in gangs of eight at a time, for whom we were responsible. In this manner the place was kept fairly clean and healthy. Anna and I carried down the salt beef and biscuit upon which they were fed. There was, however, no scanting of the fare, which

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was of good quality enough. For it was the interest of the privateers that they should bring their captives to market in prime condition, any disease or underfeeding making a great difference in the price.

It is a strange thing that on this privateer, or, to be plain, pirate ship, there was none of that equality common on such cruises. Only once did I ever hear a man before the mast speak back to one of the officers. And the next moment Saul Mark had knocked him senseless with a marlin spike. For a moment or two things looked ugly, for some of the men growled ominously. But Captain Stansfield came along the deck, as it seemed in a matter of three strides, to where Saul still stood with the spike in his hand.

"Show me the man that dares do aught but his duty on this ship!" he cried in a voice like thunder. "To your posts, men!" And in an instant the whole ship's crew stood at attention on the deck, with a regularity and discipline beautiful to see. All, that is, save the man who lay senseless along the deck.

"Speak up, Mr. Supercargo," he said, "what is this man's fault?"

Then Saul Mark told briefly the words the man had used in refusing to obey his officer.

"Did this man sign the ship rules and subject himself to the conditions?" asked Captain Stansfield of the crew.

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the answer, without apparently one dissentient voice.

"And he has insulted his officer? You all know the punishment for that offence by our articles of association. Have any of you aught to say?"

A tall fellow stepped forward, saluted, and said, "This man is my brother, sir, and the second mate has been

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putting his spite on him all this cruise, because of something that happened ashore——”

“Mr. Kirgan,” said my father, turning to the second mate, a fierce little Irishman, “I do not ask you anything of this. But tell me only what order did you give this man?”

Kirgan, a wiry bullet-headed fellow with a ferocious squint, answered curtly enough, “I bade him to wash my socks!”

“Mr. Kirgan,” said Captain Stansfield, speaking severely, “there are boys aboard whose duty it is to wash your stockings. In future you will not order my able seamen to perform such work. Yet, considering the man’s insolence, I say not that your brother hath gotten more than his due! Take him away to the sick bay!”

The crew broke into three rousing cheers, which the Captain acknowledged solely by turning his back and walking away from them. Mr. Kirgan sent a look after him of deadliest hatred. The man whom Saul had knocked down was at once removed by his brother and one of the sailors of his watch.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ISLE OF THE WINDS

Now, I had always had a kind of perverted pride in my father, even when he was accounted the greatest reprobate and villain in the country. People were so prodigiously afraid of him, and his fame and name were so constantly upon the common lip.

But now, when I saw him every day in a position of command over so well-found a ship and gallant a crew, that admiration was greatly increased, and I verily believe that if he had shown me the least civility I should have offered to join with him. But this he never did. Indeed, I cannot say that he took any interest in me at all. He did not bid me good morning when I came into the cabin, or yet good night when I went off unwillingly to my close-smelling bunk. He looked over my head as he walked the deck, and, for all my zeal and diligence in serving him, he noticed me less than any of the ship's boys who carried the pannikins and emptied the slops.

But to my mother he was unweariedly kind and unfailingly courteous. Yet by no means in an eager way, as if he desired to atone for aught or to seek any of her favours, but rather as a gracious captain to a noble passenger or royal captive, whose misfortunes entitle her to be treated with the greater dignity.

All this while we had been heading steadily south and west, as even I could make out, and nearly every day

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little Anna Mark brought me news of the ship's crew. For, being the only girl on board, she could make friends with the men much more quickly than I, having also her father's talents in that respect, with others of her own which I have indicated previously in the story.

It was on a fine bright evening after a day of light following breezes that I got my first glimpse of that tropic pearl which I was afterwards to know so intimately as the Isle of the Winds.

The clouds had concentrated themselves in a dense bar of royal crimson which overhung the whole western horizon. Beneath, the sun gathered about him little floating wisps of golden brightness, as if he had been weaving himself a fiery shroud. As he sank into the sea like a broad shield of dull scarlet, the line of the horizon was not cut truly across. An irregular black blotch, serrated and as it seemed delicately plumed, streaked itself across his disk.

The sailors, too, were all clustered forward as they had been at the chase. They stood with hands on each other's shoulders and gazed, talking all the while in low whispers. On the quarter-deck the officers of the watch paced regularly, while Captain Stansfield stood alone by himself, as was his custom.

The sun dropped, as it were pulling the daylight under the sea after him. And I had seen my first tropic island.

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All night the *Corramantee*, excellently hermaphrodite between brig and schooner, stood off and on waiting for the light, that she might thread the difficult and dangerous shoals which still separated her from the Isle of the Winds. As may be supposed, I was on deck early. And

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here little Anna Mark, who slept in my mother's cabin, joined me soon after I came up. With eager hearts we watched the broad wash of keen greenish light across the east where the sun would rise, but mostly our thoughts were on the island ahead of us and upon the mysterious life we would lead there.

Strangely, however, the blank horror and apprehension with which we started on our journey had largely disappeared. For though the men were rough enough and desperate enough, yet none among them had said an uncivil word to us. Moreover, we had great anticipations of wonders to be found under those palms and on the beaches of shining sand, which, in the eye of our imagination, glinted more brightly than if every grain had been a diamond cut and polished.

The brilliant blueness of the sea, the glistening white rocks which showed their heads here and there, the deep sapphire channels through which Saul Mark skilfully piloted the *Corramantee*, all caused Anna and me to thrill and clasp each other's hands as we stood forward among the eager sailors. I clutched a stay as the vessel, caught in the little calm belt between the trades behind her and the inshore land wind in front, rose on the long oily rollers and heaved her bowsprit high into the hot and coppery sky.

"Philip," said Anna, "I wonder what will happen to us two on that island!"

I turned to her. I know not what prompted the words. I had not the least thought or intent concerning them the moment before. But now they sprang from my lips as if I had settled on speaking them years before.

"If you love me, Anna," I said, "I care not what happens. Do you love me?" I was still holding her

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hand, and as she told me long afterwards, almost squeezing her fingers into a jelly.

She turned upon me in great surprise. "I do not know what you mean," she said, in a low intense voice. Then, as if afraid that some of the sailors who stood around might overhear—"Think shame, Philip!" she added.

"Yes, you do know, Anna," I went on with quick impulse; "you know what it means to Umphray Spurway that he loves my poor mother. You said so yourself, and if you know that, you know also what it is for me to love Anna Mark! So do not pretend!"

She was silent for a while, watching the flying-fish gleaming dark purple against the saffron of the sky as they rose and fell.

Then she said more softly, "I do know what it is to love, but I think I am too young to feel what you mean by it. Nay, I am sure that you are too young yourself to know!"

"Anna," I answered very low, for I saw her father lean over and motion to a seaman, who moved up nearer to us as if to listen, "I do know what it is to love. Even now my heart is aching for love of you. I love you far more than I love my mother!"

"Why, of course you do!" she cried, quite loud, so that I put my hand to her mouth to stay her; for the seaman was very near.

"And why of course? But pray do not speak so loud!" said I.

"I always knew you liked me best of everyone. Of course you could not help that!" she said, complacently.

"Yet you say I do not know what love is?"

"I said only that I deemed you too young to know," she made answer. Then in a moment, "Look, look,"

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she cried, "there are the palms! How beautiful to see their tall feathers wave in the wind, all blowing out one way. And there are the roofs of the houses. I wonder why some are thatched, and some all scarlet and purple?"

For she wished to change the subject—or, perhaps, wished me to think she did.

But I was not to be put off in this manner. So I said—without even taking my eyes from her cheek—of which I could see only the pretty curve, clean and firm like a boy's, not plump like a girl's—"Anna, tell me if you do not love me a little, or if you think that you will ever be able to love me as—as Umphray Spurway loves my mother?"

She laughed a curious laugh, wilful but pleased withal. I could hear the eager pleasure in it.

"Ah, Philip," she said, "I will never love you as Umphray Spurway loves your mother!"

"And why?" I asked.

"Because I know you too well, Philip," she said. "I will not worship any man—least of all one whom I can beat at the stone-throwing!"

Whereat I was indignant, for indeed the boast was quite a vain one.

"You cannot," I cried. "I will throw you all day at a bottle, and beat you soundly. But that is not the question. A man has a right to his answer from a girl!"

For I would not let the name drop. She had called me a man, and she must take the consequences. I was not going to let her go back on that great word.

"You shall have an answer then," she said, saucily. "I love you as much as your mother loves your father."

Then, being hurt at the heart that she should so slight me, and also (as I thought) make light of my mother, I withdrew my hand from hers and went and stood at the

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other side of the deck. But somehow the purple islets had turned to grey, the crimson roofs to smoky yellow. The sparkle had gone out of the sky and the fresh sea tang out of the breathing air. I stood a while by myself, and never so much as looked towards Anna Mark.

But I was conscious that she glanced every now and then at me. And I think she smiled.

By and by, however, she came over frankly enough and said, "Philip, do not be angry with me. What have I done that you should ill-use me so?"

Then said I, "Anna, I have never ill-used you. I have only told you that I loved you. And you flouted me unkindly for it."

"Well, did you expect me to fall down at your feet?" she said, a flash leaping up in her eye, as it had a way of doing at all such times. "I will if you say so. I will kiss your shoe! See here!"

And I declare, if I had not withheld her, the madcap would have done it then and there, before all the sailormen and the captain, and her own father looking down upon us.

We were now running close in, and the spits of yellow sand were stretchng out to meet and enclose us. We had at last caught the land-wind, and with Saul Mark directing the helmsman and now and then taking the wheel himself, while a crowd of shiny-skinned mulattoes and negroes ran along the shore, we glided towards a harbour-mouth, the water hissing from our stem and the whole ship lying gracefully over to the wind.

"Anna, give me a word to hearten me!" I said. "This is a pirate island. We may never get off it alive. Say a word to comfort me, and on my honour I will not trouble you any more."

"Well, I am in the same case, neither better nor

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worse," she said, "and yet I do not ask a word from Will Bowman as to whether he loves me or not!"

I was turning away sick at heart to be so flouted, but she caught me quickly by the arm.

"You see, I do not love Will Bowman!" she said; "that is why I do not want him to tell me. But I love to have you tell me that you love me!"

And that was all I could get out of her. Yet from Anna—enough.

CHAPTER XXIX

YELLOW JACK

Now there are those who laugh at the love of boy and girl, and, indeed, oftentimes it vanishes, leaving no more trace than the sea keeps of the keels that pass over it towards the harbour. Yet I think many of those who with their mouths laugh loud at calf love, keep an under-feeling of sacredness—a secret reverence for their own first loves. They may have written other names more permanently upon the slates of their heart, but I charge them to own if they have ever known nobler, more unselfish devotion than they felt for their first loves.

But if they deny the faith, and say that they never possessed any such—why, then, God pity them!—that is all. They may have filled their hands with the red haws of life; but they have missed the white hawthorn. The winter fruit may be theirs. They share it with every chattering sparrow. But the sweet scent of the flower of May will never revisit their nostrils.

Now all this concerns not my tale save that I know the world and would anticipate its laughter. Yet I write it down here, that on this pirate isle I thought more of little Anna Mark's sauciness than I did of our chances of escaping safe and sound, or even of dangling my legs over the mill lade at the back of Umphray's house and listening to the singing of the Kirkconnel Water taking its last leap downward to join the Esk.

The Isle of the Winds was a curious place, and at first

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I was greatly astonished at it. But afterwards I came to understand that it was the necessary product of a particular traffic. It is a condition of the existence of all sea freebooters that they shall have some port of call at which they can clean and lighten their ship, provision her from a secret depot of stores, give the men a run ashore and otherwise temper them into some semblance of humanity.

For in an ordinary port the sailors who sail under the Jolly Roger, or the red flag of privateering (which is no better and no worse), cannot be allowed free shore liberty like the men of law-abiding ships, who have nothing worse than a visit from the civic excisemen to fear from blabbing tongues.

Women there are in every seaport town who live by worming out of sailor-men, and even out of petty officers, the secrets of their ship and cruise. These they convey to the officers of justice, who are not slow to act upon the information received. And a pirate ship has been captured in harbour before now under the disguise of an honest merchantman, through intelligence obtained in this way.

Yet shore liberty of some sort men must have, or they would become fiends incarnate.

So here, in the Isle of the Winds, there stood this curious settlement, its roofs aflame with the purple and scarlet of running creepers, and all about it a host of brown-skinned piccaninnies running wild as the goats and clamorous as the sea-fowl.

Here it was that so many of the sailors of the *Corramantee* as had won the privilege by courage and obedience, had received permission to marry. And the place being not far from more populous lands, it happened that most had carried off either a Spanish half-breed

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maiden from the southern settlements, or a Carib woman from one of the neighbouring islands. Those who had not been thus brave or fortunate, had taken to them the nearest white-toothed woolly-haired negress, and it was about their cabins that the piccaninnies swarmed thickest.

I cannot tell what arguments the men brought to bear in order to induce the women to live with them, nor how much of force had in the first instance been applied. But this I do know, that the women were in general both buxom and happy, and that there were fewer quarrels and less ill-blood than in an ordinary Scottish village or New England settlement of the same size.

This in part was no doubt owing to my father, in prodigious awe of whom went every man and woman in the place. As was not uncommon among them, they had chosen him as their captain though he was no seaman. "For," they said, "there be many who can steer, and some who can set a course. But we Brethren of the Coast must have a king!"

And a king they had—with Saul Mark for his prime minister and Lambie the Tillicoultry Scot for his sword of justice.

For the first week we saw the island and the village mainly from the deck of the ship, but after that we had many opportunities of closer inspection. For we were taken on shore and permitted to assist at the building of a couple of new cottages, which Captain Stansfield and Will Bowman and myself were severally to inhabit. The larger and more permanent dwelling (which my father had occupied during his previous residences on the island) was given up to my mother, who kept Anna with her in spite of the ill-concealed displeasure of Saul Mark. A couple of well-favoured negro women in

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bright dresses waited upon her, and kept up a constant chatter over the low fences with their friends in the neighbouring enclosures, and even interchanged greetings with passers-by upon the beach.

The houses we built were much simpler affairs. They were raised from the earth upon stout posts about eighteen inches high. Then came a flooring of split trees, the split upper surface roughly planed. The uprights were of the same timber and seven feet high, the walls of sawn planking, and the roof of plantain leaves bound with the strong island withe which grows plentifully on the margin of the swamps.

One of these was assigned to Will Bowman and myself, and in the other Captain Stansfield set up his cot bed.

All the dwellings stood on the sickle sweep of a beach which, almost like a lagoon in shape, curved round in a couple of horns, leaving only one narrow and difficult entrance. Inside it was as still as a lake, though, as we lay awake at night, the roaring of the trade surf on the outer reefs was never out of our ears.

Looking from our door, this is what Will and I saw. First, a green strip of herbage, which in the distance looked almost like high grass, a few scattered guava bushes, then the glittering crescent of sand, and beyond, the lagoon with the herons moping in the sun. Then, if we went a little up the bank behind, or clambered on the roof, we could see the white crests and blue-black troughs of the restless Carib Sea.

Behind us were gardens or yam patches, then loose scrub. Beyond were the High Woods, as the privateers called the virgin forest, and the blue mountains crowning all. For, unlike most of these pirate shelters, our refuge was not a mere sand-bank sweltering under a

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shadeless sun, nor yet a fever-stricken mangrove swamp—though, as I found out afterwards, the Isle of the Winds was far from being immune from the latter plague.

One morning, to our vast surprise, the ship was gone and the bay in front empty of all save the dreamy yet watchful herons in their livery of black and white, and the diving sea-birds that flashed and fell out of the zenith.

Anna brought us word that the entire crew had gone on board at midnight, with the exception of those whose turn it was to take a holiday on shore. Anchor had been weighed at daybreak and the *Corramantee*, with her cargo of white slaves, sailed northward for the Carolina plantations.

Then it was that a still more fictitious peace settled down over the Isle of the Winds. I have ever thought it curious, but after all natural, that in our native Scotland and in the countries which men count civilised, we four had undergone many and desperate adventures. But here, in this wild pirate island, and among men whose profession was one of spoliation and robbery, these first months passed away as peacefully as an infant's cradle-time.

And to the very last, whatever we might be passing through, my mother was never greatly disturbed. Going out but little, occupying herself stilly and quietly on her trellised verandah or in her cool and deeply-shaded room with needle-work and knitting, living in a dreamland of her own, she was shut off from the comings and goings of the island. The cryings and ululations of the beach reached her ears as empty of meaning as the roar of the trade-surf in the offing, or the yelling of the sea-birds that darted down into our poultry yard and carried off

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the food scattered for the Scottish barndoor fowl we had brought with us from Abercairn.

But Anna and I were not content to live in any such seclusion. The instinct of exploration, common to all healthy children of the mixed Saxon races, was specially strong in us. And whatever of the gypsy there was in Anna aided and abetted this instinct of roving.

Will Bowman had already begun to train a squad of young half-breeds, mostly boys about fifteen, in the rudiments of drill and the use of arms according to the German manual and platoon exercise which Umphray Spurway had taught his weavers. And those of the privateer's men who were off duty on shore, would often condescend to come down to the exercise ground and smoke a pipe, watching with appreciation the evolutions of these smart lads, who took to soldiering in the civilised manner with all the avidity of Prussians, and who would stand and bake or march and sweat all day on the parade-ground, as if each had been paid the salary of a general.

So of Will for a time we saw not much, but he was always ready to help us in everything, and in time of need proved himself a very staunch and trusty friend. As indeed shall afterward appear.

It was a blessed relief to find my father gone and Saul Mark's cottage empty as well. For we could not help feeling that the small beady eyes of Anna's father were ever upon us, and even now that he had probably arranged with some satellite to keep track of our movements.

It was about this time that Anna, who was always scraping romantic acquaintance with every waif and stray, attached to herself a dusky-skinned youth with one hand only, who answered to the name of Yellow Jack.

Yellow Jack was a lad extraordinarily active, both in

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mind and body. But from his behaviour in the village no one would have suspected him of either. It was only in the bush, or when face to face with an emergency, that his true character appeared.

Yellow Jack's right hand had been cut off at the wrist, he never revealed how, but I think by privateers or some former pirates of the Isle, from the exceeding hatred he bore them all. So the lad had been allowed to grow up among the women and the liberty men, doing very much as he pleased. He carried water, and scrubbed out pots and pannikins. He watched the fires at the sugar boiling, and, when he was bidden, he went swiftly on errands, which he faithfully discharged. But to deceive his masters he preserved at all times a countenance which denoted only stupid and vacant mirth, for that is the best passport to the good-will of sailormen of every kind. His mouth was ever on the grin. In the village his laugh rolled out mellow as the maple syrup of the north, and Yellow Jack was the willing butt of half the jokes on the island.

But among the coloured folk it was different. I never saw any of these come near Yellow Jack without a kind of involuntary shrinking into smaller space—the gesture, in fact, which everyone makes on walking through a thicket of nettles.

Anna had first attached Yellow Jack to herself by a piece of kindness to an old bent negro woman who was painfully bringing in a bundle of herbs and roots from the High Woods. She found the aged crone sitting exhausted and half-blind upon the buttresses of a tree on the edge of the forest. The old woman was wizened and smoke-dried till she seemed every moment about to shed her mortal tegument like a husk that falls of itself to the ground. But Anna talked brightly to her, at the

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same time shouldering her burden and with her unoccupied hand helping her along the path.

As they entered the village, loud and long laughed the liberty men, who smoked and lounged about the creeper-grown porches and under the grey-beard streamers of the live oaks. But every negro woman, looking from a balcony or bobbing head-dresses about the well, ran for her dearest gossip to tell her the news—how “old Mam Duppy the Obeah woman was walking past the white men’s houses with the tall young buckra girl who lived in the Captain’s house.”

And I think when Yellow Jack joined the pair near his mother’s hut and the whole three entered it together, none in the village expected to see Anna trip forth again from the threshold looking as fresh as a Moreham daisy with the morning dew upon it.

But when it was seen that Anna did not die from such dread companionship, but, on the contrary, that she had always the best fruits, the finest flowers, the brightest skin, the clearest eye, it was recognised that a stronger Obeah warred for her, and she was besieged with attentions as she walked about. Negro women brought her their chickens to overlook. Half-caste boys asked her to bless their lurcher dogs and charm them from snakebite. And Anna did these things too, and made no very bad mistakes, so that her fame waxed greater and greater in the land.

It is of two excursions to the woods in the company of Yellow Jack that I have now to tell, as they had an important influence on our future and were indeed the means by which we were able ultimately to leave the Isle of the Winds.

It was an excuse for us to get away that we were accustomed to shoot the wild pigeons which about sunrise

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passed overhead in great flocks, returning towards evening to the High Woods with a mighty noise of rushing wings. The little yellow children of the village were set to watch the gardens, and scare them when they alighted anywhere near the settlement. Otherwise they would soon have destroyed every green thing, besides depriving the swine (which wandered everywhere like privileged scavengers killing snakes and devouring rubbish) of the staple of their meat.

In addition, there were many other birds which Yellow Jack showed us how to capture. He had a hook which he fastened to the stump of his right arm. He had contrived it himself out of an old bar of iron he had picked up, and he was able to do many wonderful things with it.

But after all, it was his left hand and arm that were so astonishing. He would swing himself like a monkey from tree to tree, and by means of a rope round his waist and with the assistance of his hook he could walk up the stem of the tallest palm in the island almost as quickly as we could make our way along a plain road.

The morning was still awash with dewy freshness when I set out, carrying my provisions, a gun, and a bag with compartments for ammunition. Anna had stolen silently from her sleeping-room in my mother's house. She met me behind the hedge of prickly pear.

"All quiet!" she whispered. "Where is Yellow Jack?"

"He is waiting further on," I answered. For now the one-armed boy never walked with us along the green bank in front of the line of cottages which constituted the street of the little town. He thought his society would shame us, and for all his broad grins he was full of dignity.

But we had hardly passed the palisadoes of the gardens

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before he was at our side, his usually social face now grave and quiet. Yet there came a look of pleasure into his eyes at sight of Anna. Me he tolerated, chiefly because Anna and I were in a manner looked upon as each other's medicine. We "belonged," said the negresses, comprehensively. And the belief was my great safeguard.

Yellow Jack was laden with a spare cutlass, which he assured me I would need to use in the High Woods. He also carried a knife of large size, for the virgin forest is no respecter of persons.

He had also brought leathern leggings for Anna, so that she could withstand the pricks of the bush thorns, and lime juice to mix with the water which we hoped to find in the woods.

When with us Yellow Jack spoke a curious and picturesque dialect of his own, quite different from the broken English he used with the white men down in the village. Moreover, it was pleasant to listen to him, for he possessed a rich mellow voice, with a wild ring in its cadences as often as he became excited, or when he burst into little trills of song, which he did as naturally as a bird singing in the top of a tropic tree among the liana stems and the gorgeous trumpet flowers.

To me Yellow Jack always seemed to be translating from some noble barbarous tongue, and at times his ideas had a certain wild splendour of their own.

"King's son I," he would say, "in my own country—a prince of fighting men. There" (he pointed down to the village) "a slave, 'Yellow Jack'—but yonder" (he pointed over the sea from which the mist was lifting and melting as it lifted)—"yonder, Eborra, a chief among chiefs!"

Then, as if he had perchance offended us by claiming

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more than his due, he turned quickly to Anna. "But always your friend!" he said.

And indeed the friendship of Yellow Jack proved to be by no means the least of the blessings assured to us by little Anna Mark.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HIGH WOODS

As soon as we reached the verge of that great primeval forest a feeling of awe and terror came over us both. Yet I think that I was more frightened than Anna, though she also drew in near to me, a thing which I was pleased to note. The dark purple carpet of decaying vegetation on which we moved, the sudden noises, the rushing hither and thither of unseen animals, the stealthy stirring of snakes in the tawny grasses, the deep shadows, the fantastic rigging of aerial ropes, the huge trees which started upward, festooned with creepers, and presently lost themselves in a green haze before they had risen thirty feet—these all combined to produce on the mind of country-bred youth a feeling of uncomprehending awe.

Then the huge ants which followed each other interminably up the trunks of the trees and made trodden ways of every branch, the yellow-banded wasps, great as bumble bees on the meadows of Moreham, which flew in our faces with a buzz of anger, the calling crabs which waved their arms and challenged each other on every bare patch as we began to climb the mountain ridge—these and a thousand other wonders kept our hearts continually in our mouths as our guide led us deeper and deeper into the maze.

But Eborra never hesitated. In the village he was, as he said, Yellow Jack, a slow-moving, lazy young negro, whose misfortune alone shielded him from being com-

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pelled by the overseers to perform much more work. He was indeed to some extent protected by the fears of all the coloured and half-coloured population. But here in the native jungle he moved swiftly as the monkeys among the trees. He disappeared in towers of leaves and peeped out again to show us safer and easier ways. He was never once at a loss, though we plunged deeper and ever deeper into the wilderness.

After we had advanced slowly for an hour, we emerged with Yellow Jack into an opener glade.

"In what direction you find the village?" he called down to us.

I pointed behind us in the direction from which we had come. With a slight smile on his face, very different from the broad idiot grin which like a mask he wore in the village, Yellow Jack led us to the brink of a tangled cliff overgrown with bright tropic plants. He pointed with his iron hook as he drew these aside, and laughed a low laugh of irony and contempt, like that of one who has outwitted a powerful adversary.

For there almost at our feet lay the buccaneer village, every house distinct, and the doings of its inmates apparent as if drawn upon a map. The women went and came to the well. The mulatto overseers directed the labour in the gardens. The piccaninnies played in the dust. Even such strangers as we were could make out many of the people by headmark, and Yellow Jack, with his eagle eyes accustomed from childhood to distinguish dusky faces (which still looked mostly alike to us), recognised every one of the scores who could be seen below at their various tasks.

"Do the white men know of this spy-hole?" I asked of Yellow Jack.

He shook his head with grim satisfaction.

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"Not so," he answered, "none knows save Eborra, his mother, and now you two. It is for her sake!" he added, as if to clear his conscience, and he nodded at Anna.

After a pause Yellow Jack pointed significantly to the large chief's house which was occupied by my mother. We could see the negro servitors moving about it inside the hedge of prickly pear and that curious spiky plant which is called in Spanish the "Figs of the Moor." The headdresses of these women were quite distinguishable in colour and pattern in the keen air of morning. It seemed as if we could almost hear the sound of their voices.

"Look more carefully—there, behind the hedge!" said Yellow Jack, still pointing with his hook.

"I see nothing!" I said, nor for the moment did I, for immediately behind the broad prickly hedge began the deep-green of the scrub, and behind that again the ordered lines and stone walls of the gardens.

"There," said our guide; "see—at the end of the chief's house! Look closely!"

"I do see," whispered Anna Mark, catching my arm in great excitement. "I see two men standing talking together. They are dressed in white clothes and have hats on their heads."

I thought a little. These were men of the crew of the *Corramantee*. Could she have returned since we had come into the forest? But that was impossible, for the enclosed bay was bare and burningly blue under the tropic sun, unstirred by any keel, and out beyond the Carib Sea sparkled and danced empty of all life save the wheeling sea-birds.

Yet here at our feet were two armed men of the crew—not liberty men, but men of the ship whom we knew well. They were armed also, and on guard. For presently, concluding their conversation they separated and

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began to pace to and fro, one in front and the other in rear of the house where my mother dwelt.

"So it is always!" said Yellow Jack, "night and day, always two men watch. Then sometimes one comes and watches these two! Wait, in a moment you see him!"

The two men on guard paced slowly up and down, each covering two sides of the cottage enclosure. We could see the sun shining on their musket barrels as they halted a moment at the turn.

"Why do they watch my mother's house?" I said aloud.

"It is always so—ever since the Chief of the Silver Rings took away the ship. They watch and they watch! Eborra watch too! Here he comes!"

And with his finger he pointed to a hut which stood just beyond one of the garden walls. A man stood in the doorway. We could see his form but indistinctly in the dimness of the chamber. He came a little farther out so that the sunshine of the morning caught him. It was my father!

"*He who watches the watchers!*" explained Yellow Jack.

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This shook me greatly. And I had begun to feel so secure in this island that I quite resented it. The remembrance of Scotland had begun to lose its edge. All appeared so peaceful. The liberty men ate and grew fat in the society of their dusky wives. The shining piccannies tumbled on the shore like young seals, or fled in riotous hand-linked groups from our approach. My mother abode in her beautiful cottage with the shore-vine and frangipani aglow about it. All seemed peaceful as the click of her knitting needles.

Yet here was my father, not gone away with the ship,

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but watching and setting others to watch my poor mother. What could his object be?

"Captain with the golden coat stay," commented Yellow Jack; "Captain with silver rings go with ship—sell boys, buy provision, come back. Then all go find Spanish ship—town—plantation—kill, steal, make prisoner. When Captain with silver rings return, it no good to stay in village. You come with Eborra then. He hide you in his town."

And smiling in his quiet fashion, he let go the veil of green bush which he had drawn aside that we might look down upon the unconscious village. He took us a dozen steps from the cliff edge on which we had stood.

"You no find it again now!" he said triumphantly.

And truly, no more we could. The dense curtain of green vegetation stirred in the morning breeze, but though we came near to breaking our necks from the cliff edge and got ourselves bitten by red ants in snatching heedlessly at likely branches, we could not again catch so much as a glimpse of the village.

"Ah, do not touch!" cried Yellow Jack, suddenly; "that is manchineal poison! Leaves eat hand, poison blood. Keep behind Eborra. Follow him!"

And so with faces wondrously lengthened we re-entered the virgin forest. Our guide went on ahead with his accustomed readiness. Continually he would reach back a hand to help Anna, while with his hook he attached himself to some tough lianasse which, like a great cable, bound together (as it were) the earth and sky. Then I, following humbly behind, would in my turn be glad of Anna's hand to steady me.

But the unknown world in which I found myself, and the veiled cruelty and treachery with which we seemed surrounded, preyed on my spirit. I became a victim to

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the deepest melancholy. I felt a sense of depression which was half the sight of my father lurking on the island when I had thought him far away, and half the hurried and imperfect breakfast I had eaten.

Nothing comforted me so much as the touch of Anna's hand. And I think she let it stay longer in mine because she knew that my heart was troubled. Yellow Jack alone seemed not to feel the need of any cheering influence. After an hour's steady progression through the dim green aisles he pointed ahead.

It was dusky as in a cavern where we stood, but before us we saw two giant trees stand like gate-posts of a brighter land. Then, framed as in a picture, lo! a stretch of bare hillside, and a saw-edged mountain above, golden against the blue-black sky.

"Out there we eat!" Yellow Jack explained briefly.

And with that fresh buoyancy which enables the young to set trouble aside (or at least to stop thinking about it till it grows again insistent), Anna and I went dancing over the glaring white rocks, laughing at the clicking and clattering land crabs which scuttled into their holes at our approach or stood solemnly waving belligerent claws at us on the top of every rocky knoll.

Eborra led the way over the shoulder of the ridge till he came to a shady spot, where some wild pines gave a more homely look to the tropic landscape. He pointed to a little spring which rose dimpling in a tiny cup of rock, overflowed, and then ran merrily away down the hillside.

"Bush water not good," he said; "this good!"

So on a flat stone our guide undid his pack, and we feasted luxuriously in the airy shade of the pines. The sea-breeze, cool at this altitude, fanned our brows, still

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prickly with perspiration and the close breathless heaviness of the High Woods.

I have rarely enjoyed a meal more or felt more refreshed by anything than by the cool fruit and sparkling water with which we washed it down. When we rose to look about us, our spirits also had risen to their natural pitch again, and we were ready to follow our guide anywhere.

CHAPTER XXXI

FER-DE-LANCE

YELLOW JACK threw the remains of our feast into a crack in the rock with a gesture which I took to signify that it was an oblation to the deities or devils of the place. Then he turned upon us with grave eyes, in which was no trace of laughter.

“We have played,” he said; “we have seen—*tzutt*, it is all nothing! If you are not afraid I will now show you something—the real—the home of Obi, of the hid treasure—the palace of the king! You are not afraid?”

Now for myself I had had quite enough of going to look for hid treasures, but I could not show the white feather where Anna remained staunch.

“What is that?” I asked, as much to gain time as anything. “Do you mean the treasure of Sir Harry Morgan?”

To my surprise Eborra nodded vehemently.

“Yes—yes—yes,” he said, “the treasure of Morgan! This was his isle long before these men came. They do not know, but Eborra knows. And he knows, too, the guards of the treasure. Some day he show him to the white men—when Eborra ready. Then”—he laughed ironically—“the white men will die. The treasure guards will kill him. But you two shall see the treasure to-day, and yet be safe, because you are Eborra’s friends and there is no hurt in you!”

It was a long speech for the African, who did not often

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use so many words. But, for all that, I was by no means sure in my mind about following. There was a strangeness in these great forests which daunted me. My very ignorance shut me in and made me helpless. All about were unseen deadly enemies—poisonous plants, dangerous animals, and in addition (I doubted not), dread things that have no name—devilkins of the solitudes, demons of the place, ancient as the stones and cruel-hearted as death itself.

But, before I could make up my mind, Anna had risen with a quick gesture of acquiescence, and swung her satchel across her shoulders. Then she set her hand jauntily on the hilt of the knife at her belt.

“We are not afraid,” she said; “we trust you, Eborra!”

“No, *you* are not afraid!” he replied.

Then Anna bent upon the crippled black a look which, had it been turned upon a white man, would have made me angry. For the minx knew well enough the power she had over the lad, and, like all women, she was quite willing to exercise it.

Yet instinctively I felt the danger she ran with a savage like Eborra. Nevertheless, I could not draw back, nor even declare my distrust.

“It is good!” said Yellow Jack briefly, and, without another word, led the way down the hill, and, parting the green wall of leaves, plunged again into the densest of the jungle.

This time it was by a darker, more terrible way that Eborra led us. We walked no more in the glorious tangle of the forest, that riot of life and vigour and beauty, but rather through a Valley of the Shadow of Death, like that about which my mother was so fond of reading to me in the book we called the “Pilgrim”

book. And this dusky guide of ours, with his shiny skin and iron-hooked arm, made no bad Apollyon; save that, instead of withstanding us and hurling darts, he only led us on deeper and deeper into the dank and rotting smother.

The lianas dropped from the trees, and crawled like huge boa-constrictors along the marshy ground. The boughs were feathered grey with long dank drifts of Old Man's Beard. We began to spring from root to root and from log to log, swinging ourselves by hanging vines over pools of black water sleeping under a deep canopy of gloom, stirred only by the oily plunge of the dread copperhead snakes, which slid off the logs at our approach and disappeared noiselessly in the swelter of green rotting weed and floating vegetable sludge.

Many a time I would have stopped and cried, "Turn back. I will go no farther!" But Anna was staunch, and I could do no less than follow, though much against my better judgment. Yellow Jack never hesitated a moment, but sped onward as if he had been walking on a made road. After twenty minutes or half an hour of this toil he brought us once more to firmer ground. Before us rose a darksome knoll in the midst of the swamp. It appeared to ascend on all sides in the shape of an inverted bowl. The lower slopes were covered with creeping plants which gave forth an acrid smell when trodden on and presently we moved knee-deep in a lively growth of poison oak. All the ground appeared to rustle underfoot with a dry noise, almost like the chirr of crickets, but much fainter—a metallic sound or the echo of a sound which somehow carried a thrill of horror in it.

"Walk carefully in my steps," said Eborra, "and do not speak! We are very near!"

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Anna stretched a hand back to me, and I kept the line footstep by footstep, cheered by her act.

Round about the mound a vast group of black pines towered to the skies. These had their heads all bent together, like chiefs at a consultation. They appeared to be listening to each other's whispered talk. On the crest of the bowl, so soon as our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we saw a kind of huge round tower cut off in the middle, as if unfinished. It appeared to be built of black stones or rather of a single stone. Creepers of a slimy green colour climbed sparsely upon it, and little arsenical-hued apples, with brilliant scarlet patches upon them, hung temptingly down. All round about the swamp slept black and sluggish. Underfoot unseen creatures stirred in the undergrowth. The huge redoubt in front shot up like a wizard tower seen in a dream, and I doubted not but that some hideous enchanter would presently issue forth, or the twisted face of a demon look at us with sudden grimace over the crumbling ramparts.

Yet as we came nearer, it seemed to me that no earthly hands had laid the courses and fitted the joints of that Titanic masonry. For on the side by which we approached, the tower rose wholly smooth and black, save where in little irregular cracks like those in half-dried mud poisonous creepers had obtained a hold for their tendrils. A rumbling uncertainty of sound came from within which shook our midriffs like the first pangs of an earthquake.

As we approached still nearer, Eborra kept up a curious hissing hum, which rose and fell like the wind whistling through the chink of an ill-fitting shutter. I was conscious also of a strange sense of uneasiness, as if I had been walking over the waves of a half-congealed

sea. The ground crept under my feet, heaving and contracting itself like a trampled worm, and at the thought a feeling akin to nausea came over me. My knees shook underneath me till I thought I should fall, and, but for the greater horror of falling into the midst of that unknown hissing, they must indeed have given way.

Yet Anna Mark's fingers were steady in mine, though a little cold, and she followed Yellow Jack with confidence and decision. Considering my own state of mind, I could not think of this courage in a girl without great marvelling. The smooth black tower now rose abruptly in front of us, and our guide turned a little to the right and began to edge round the base towards the opposite face. I laid my hand upon it. It was hot to the touch. Here rude steps were revealed, cut deep in the black stone, and up these Eborra began to scramble, reaching his hand down to Anna and sticking his hook into the crevices of the heated rock.

"Do not fear," he said; "in a moment we shall behold!"

Anna helped me up till I could set my chin over the verge of the black tower. The wall of it was broad enough for me to lie flat upon and look within. Nor upon the summit was it so unpleasantly warm as lower down. Anna held me by the arm, anxious, not for herself, but lest I should venture too near. She need not have troubled, though the action comforted me.

This is what we saw. A huge black gulf or pot-hole with straight sides, cracked and creeper-grown, sank for thirty or forty feet sheer down. The floor of this curious natural tower or volcanic crater was arched like the bulge which comes in the middle of a pot just before the water boils.

Eborra pointed downward with his hook.

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“The place of Morgan’s treasure,” he said, grimly; “it is waiting there for the brave man who will come to take it!”

The black well of the tower beneath us was diversified by curious grooved rings set at intervals. In these were holes, many of them large enough to thrust a man’s arm into. We saw no steam or fire, but the whole place smelt of sulphur, and a moist heat like that which rises from wet sands under a burning sun wavered visibly about us.

I knew not what our guide meant. I could neither see anything resembling treasure, nor yet the dread guardian of whom he spoke. But Yellow Jack lay with his face over the edge, smiling gently and watching the bottom of the black pot-hole.

“Look!” he cried suddenly, pointing downward with his hook.

And then for the first time I observed that the bubble-like black floor beneath us was not wholly stationary. It appeared indeed to be solid. I would have walked upon it without fear, but yet the whole seemed to be turning over slowly and almost imperceptibly. Indeed, the only way in which the motion of the mass could be noted was by watching the inclination and positions of the sticks and stumps of trees which stood out from the surface.

The object at which Eborra desired us to look was a square-shaped box or cube. For nothing could be discovered of its internal condition because of the black coating of pitch which covered it and hung down from its tilted edge like ill-melted wax.

“Morgan’s treasure!” affirmed our guide confidently, “also the treasure of many more! Obi turns it in the hollow of his hand.”

I was still more mystified than before, and did not

even ask a question. The black cube was slowly lifted upwards, turning invisibly all the time, so that the angle which had been averse from us, first pointed to the zenith and was afterwards inclined towards us, before finally sinking out of sight beneath the surface.

At last Yellow Jack deigned to explain.

"Pitch!" he said, "what is thrown in does not sink, but turns and turns for ever—now above, now below. Morgan's men threw it in before Captain Stansfield took the island from them. He never found it. But Eborra's mother knew. Eborra knows. Now you know!"

"But," said I, "if the great treasure be down there, why do you not get it out? Sooner or later some one will stumble upon this place and rob you of your wealth! You should hide it in a safer place."

"There is none," said our guide confidently. "You will believe when I show you the guardians of the treasure. Do not move. Only look!"

The half-caste leaned far over into the interior of the tower. He hummed the strange minor tune over again in a louder tone. Nothing that I could see happened. Then suddenly he whistled shrilly, and even as we looked we saw the circular ledges beneath us suddenly wake into hideous life. From each of the black pigeon-holes protruded a flat and ugly head. Then the ruddy coils of a snake seven or eight feet long and as thick as my arm appeared, till all the circular well of the strange tower appeared to be alive with horrid waving scales, debased foreheads, and forked tongues.

Yellow Jack leaned still farther over and whistled a quick jiggling tune. At the first sound of it the great snakes opened their jaws so wide that the white poison fangs could be seen hanging down clear of the thin retracted lips. As the time quickened, every serpent gath-

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ered itself into a coil with its head in the centre, and began to dance up and down in time to the music. There must have been several hundreds of them there beneath us, down in the black gullet of the crater.

The lad stopped and resumed the humming noise he had been making all the way up the hill. Whereupon the snakes, as if soothed, began to creep back to their holes without taking any further notice of us or of the snake-charmer.

We scrambled down in haste, and as we took hands over that unholy creeping mound, Eborra jerked his hook back over his shoulder in the direction of the pitch crater.

“*Fer-de-lance!*” he said. “As the lightning strikes, so he strikes! *Fer-de-lance* guards Morgan’s treasure!”

And at the name of the most dreaded snake in the world, of which every child on the island had terrible stories to tell, I resolved within me that it would take many Morgan’s treasures to tempt me within reach of those gaping jaws, lashing tails, and white gleaming fangs.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE JOLLY-BOAT

YELLOW JACK had indeed more than kept his promise. He had shown us the thin crust of kindly treatment on which we were depending. Why Captain Stansfield had not gone with the ship I could not then understand. I understood afterwards that, as the wretched white slaves were disposed of in His Majesty's plantations, and the transaction must be one of considerable publicity, it was not judged prudent for Captain Stansfield to appear. For, since his escape, descriptions of his person had been sent across to the colonial Governments, and all Scottish ships were closely scrutinised for the escaped murderer. Also in Virginia and the Carolinas there was no Provost Gregory Partan to blind the eyes of the authorities.

But at that time I put down my father's secret presence on the island to some fell design upon my mother. I resolved therefore to devise immediately means of escape from the Isle of the Winds, and to take my chance upon the mainland whenever we could reach it. I thought that the distance could not be very great, at least to some of the larger and more civilised islands. But I had no more exact idea of the geography than a vague remembrance of a map in the old Moll's "Atlas and Compendium" which had belonged to my grandfather.

However, I resolved first to question our guide, and so, after resting a few days, I asked him again to accompany Anna and myself into the woods on pretext of

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gathering the ripe plums of a tall and beautiful tree which grew there.

Yellow Jack was not unwilling, and with a wide grimace and a loud and vacant laugh, cried out that he was ready, asking only time to go in and warn his mother.

"Eborra," I said, as soon as we were without the village, and safe from the prying ears of the liberty men, "must we always stay here? Is there no way to escape among Christian people?"

He smiled his wistful smile.

"Already you are tired of poor Obeah boy? Christian you like better. Are not these Christian?" he pointed with bitter irony to the buccaneer village beneath us.

"Nay, Eborra," I said, "we are not tired of you!"

And Anna chimed in, "No, truly! You are the only friend we have on this accursed island!"

And our quick eager speeches pleased him no little.

On this occasion we kept away to the right, skirting the High Woods, and walking first along the shore and then among the easier herbage on the margin of the bay. I had noticed that the sailors of the *Corramantee* never by any chance wandered in this direction, but always took their walks southward along the opposite curve of the crescent. We were now heading towards its northern horn.

I asked Yellow Jack the reason why the sailors avoided this place.

He pointed to a low common-growing bush, like the alders which fringed the Kirkconnel Water at home.

"That is the reason," he said, sententiously.

And he indicated a huge snake which lay along a branch with its flat head swaying a little over and towards us. "*Fer-de-lance* strike at the faces of those

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who pass beneath—strike like a whiplash—so—and then return back to his place !”

“ Let us go farther out,” I said, thinking of Anna, “ where there is at least clean yellow sand to walk on. Why run the risk of dying in a swamp by serpent’s poison ? ”

“ He never will touch Eborra, nor yet Eborra’s friends, and these are all quick-sands ! ” said the lad. And though it thrilled me with fear to see him, he went up close and passed his hand caressingly up and down the snake’s back, humming at the same time his low, continuous song. Anna and I shuddered to look at him, but Eborra was perfectly calm ; and the huge *fer-de-lance* curved his ruddy back like a cat petted by the fire-side, darting out his forked tongue and moving his head quickly to and fro before our guide’s face.

“ He Obeah—I Obeah ! ” said Yellow Jack, and with a farewell caress he came on with us once more through the scrubby undergrowth. We were soon forcing our way with cutlass and knife through the tangle towards the northern horn of the bay. Here, at some former time, the whole face of the cliff had fallen down in a vast tumbled confusion, thousands of huge blocks being piled indiscriminately over each other, and these, seen from the sea, were full of black holes, overgrown with tasseled creepers and prickly pear—the haunt, so the sailor-men said, of wild animals and yet more deadly snakes.

Into this tangle Yellow Jack led us by a path which had obviously been trodden more than once before, as swiftly and confidently as a man will walk up to his own front door.

“ Do not fear,” he said ; “ I will show you how to escape from these Christians.”

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So, greatly heartened by his promise, we followed, Anna as usual leading the way, and our guide putting the creepers aside from before the girl's face by holding them in the hook at the end of his right arm till she had passed. As for me, I had to attend to myself.

The huge down-throw of rock, heaped high above in fantastic masses, was a very rabbit warren below, through whose tunnels Eborra threaded his way—gliding under this block and clambering over the next. We followed down long, gloomy passages, and over miniature mountain passes. Then, ducking low again, we emerged safely on the loveliest little bay, completely sheltered from all sight of the sea and defenced on the land side from the buccaneers' village by the deadly quick-sands we had seen.

Anna clapped her hands at the revelation, and cried out with pleasure at the lovely sand and shells on the shore. The shells were not broken to pieces, as on the beach in front of the village, by the force of the waves, but every tiny turret-like form was perfect to its last whorl. Some were marked like stair-cases, with steps of alternate yellow and red. Anna bent and gathered handfuls and finally lapfuls of these, murmuring all the while with a kind of tenderness, "Ah, that I had you home with me at the Miln House, what boxes I should make of you! How happy I should be!"

And this was the sole complaint I heard her utter all the time she was on the island.

In one corner of this fairy's paradise, and sheltered from the wash of any seas by the great jutting nose of the north horn, a ship's jolly-boat rode at anchor close to a little natural pier, as taut and trim as if the Indian-men's crew had just left her.

I ran to her and found that she was both well-kept

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and well-found, having her four oars commodiously packed under a protecting awning, a short-socketed spar for hoisting a sail, and all the necessary conveniences for making a voyage of some length. A chain of stout links of iron connected her stem with the anchor at the bottom of the little harbour.

“We must set sail at once, before the ship comes back!” I cried eagerly. “Where did you get the boat? And why have you not escaped long ago?”

For the marvel of possessing such a treasure, and yet remaining in a position of slavery, troubled me.

But Yellow Jack held up his handless arm, and said reproachfully, without answering my first question, “This is the reason! Also whom would Eborra trust except his weak old mother? And whither would he go, when there—there—and there” (pointing south, north, and east) “are slaves, slaves—only slaves?”

Then he guided us to a small hut built of drift-wood and thatched with broad palmetto leaves, which stood unseen in a charming recess of the rocks.

“Eborra’s house!” he explained, with a proud and satisfied look. And here, upon blocks of wood rudely shaped as stools, we sat us down and ate bananas and strange fruits which our guide had brought with him, while almost at our feet the wavelets hissed crisply along the beach of bright shells and golden sand.

The black stood silent a long time before he spoke.

“You Eborra’s friends,” he said. “You not like the others. Suppose Eborra shows you how to escape, you never sell him into slavery. Never let cruel white man whip his old mother—because she is a witch!”

I could not tell him that still in my own country poor old women like his mother were condemned for witchcraft, and that, not so long ago, one had been burned

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with all the circumstances of civil and ecclesiastical pomp upon the borough moor of Abercairn itself.

On the contrary, Anna promised him that if we were delivered and restored to our country, he should be rewarded and cared for, and his mother also. He turned on her a look of dog-like gratitude, and, taking the girl's hand, he set it on his head. "Eborra your slave!" he said gratefully.

Then, in fragmentary, but easily understood sentences, he told us that if we did endeavour to escape, we must go northward, that a chain of islands connected us with the larger settlements of Puerto Rico and Jamaica, where we would find governments, and ships in which to return to our native land. But he warned us that the voyage would prove a long and dangerous one. Moreover, the jolly-boat was so slow that if the *Corramantee* chanced to return about the time of our escape we must certainly be recaptured.

Still, here was a hope, a possibility, and according to my fashion I began to build upon it. In five minutes I had us all back in imagination at New Milns, my uncle John dethroned, the prince come to his own. And as for the princess——

But Yellow Jack broke in remorselessly upon the beauty of my vision. "To-night or to-morrow at latest the *Corramantee* will return. We must wait till they lay her ashore to careen her. We need many things for the voyage. We must find casks for water and bring them hither; we must take dried tongues, smoked beef——"

"How can we get these," interrupted Anna, "unless we steal? We cannot buy them."

Yellow Jack looked at her in astonishment.

"It is no sin to steal from a thief," he said. "Buc-

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caneer cut off Eborra's hand. Eborra take boat to help him to get back his liberty. Will he ever get that back?" He held up the stump of his arm as he spoke, smiling strangely as he did so. And neither of us made any further objection, so easily is morality sometimes satisfied.

I asked Eborra how he knew that the *Corramantee* would return speedily. "My mother told me she saw it sailing hither. It fought and took a ship. Many people were killed. Two ships will come with much plunder, to-night—to-morrow, perhaps!"

I said to myself that if this proved to be true his mother would be a witch indeed, and in my own country might be in even greater danger than in any pirate isle. For I thought of Mr. John Bell.

We went back, not by the way we had come, but through the silent woods—Eborra, like the guardian demon of the place, still humming his curious song, and the deadly snakes waving their heads at us from the boughs. Bright-coloured birds flashed across us. Strange flowers gleamed amid the dull green of the foliage. Far off we could hear a sound like a bell struck in some church tower, a solemn note, at once reverberant and sonorous—then stillness yet more complete, and again after a space that solemn toll, as if in the deeps of the unknown wood the dead were burying the dead.

Then out of this intenser silence from the forest edges, where the High Woods stood up like a black rampart wall, would come a sudden terrible scream, or a burst of laughter equally hideous—some bird seized by a serpent, or perchance only a howling monkey playing a rude bo-peep with his kind.

An hour afterwards, as we entered the village with

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our hastily seized bunches of grapes and satchels of wild plums, we attracted no attention ; something more absorbing in interest had happened. The whole population stood at gaze, and even my mother was on the balcony of her house, looking out to sea as eagerly as any. Two ships had been sighted, one with three and the other with two masts. They were heading directly for the island. And I knew not whether Yellow Jack's mother was truly a witch, or whether our guide owed his prevision to some superior trick of eyesight.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JIM PEMBURY MAKES A MISTAKE

BUT at any rate we had now something definite to do. The jolly-boat must be provisioned. Will Bowman must be enlisted ; a watch kept upon the beach for such readily conveyable articles as would be useful to us in our adventure ; and, most difficult of all, my mother humoured and kept in ignorance till the last moment.

It was manifestly too late for the ships to pass the intricate and dangerous passage of the reefs before the morning. But I do not think that in the buccaneer village there were many shut eyes that night. A continual hum of voices came up to our ears, and as we crawled cautiously along the shore the acrid smell of tobacco or the red glow from a lop-sided pipe-bowl told that the liberty men were discussing the chances of the new capture. Anna and I stole near a group of them, that we might listen to their talk. We might hear something which might prove useful ; or so we told each other. For with the throwing overboard of one convention, many others go.

But we were bound to escape, and must not stand upon a scruple. We had resolved to suspend the Commandment we had learned: "Thou shalt not steal." And so the unwritten addition, "Thou shalt not eavesdrop," could be no more of any binding interpretation for us.

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“Tell ye what,” said one man, whom I recognised by his accent as Rodney Pax, a red-bearded burly man, and a great favourite on account of his good-humour; “if yonder boat’s a three-master, I’m glad I was not aboard o’ the *Corramantee* when she was took. Fightin’ I am with you in, but walkin’ the plank blindfold! Ugh! That’s what gets me, Jim! I can hear them scream as they hit the water!”

It was Jim Pembury who replied, a lean, snaky, gypsy-like fellow with a nose broken in combat.

“For me,” he said, between quick puffs of his pipe, “I see no two ways. Either die old in the ditch or run your chance of dying young on the scaffold. I never did hold with this cant of mercy. If we are Brethren of the Coast, Brethren of the Coast let us be. No more I don’t hold with bringing white women here with a palace for them to live in, and that boy and girl running peering everywhere. No good comes o’ that, as I see!”

“One’s Captain’s son—t’other’s supercargo’s daughter! That’s why!” said another out of the darkness.

“P’raps they’ll make it up, and start a new crew on their own blessed accounts!” chuckled yet another.

“First we know,” continued Jim Pembury, “this island will get blowed on, and we’ll hear the magistrate in his wig a-tellin’ us that we had better get ready to be hanged by the neck till we be dead. . . . ‘And the Lord have——’!”

“Stow that, Jim,” said Rodney Pax, quickly; “no good ever comes o’ takin’ them words in vain!”

“Rodney’s turning soft, I guess, like Captain and old Saul!” said Jim Pembury.

“Dare you say as much to either o’ them you’ve named, Jim?” retorted Rodney. “Tony Drake an’

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me 'ill come along and bring home the pieces in a fo'e's'le sack, if you do !”

“ If you think I'm afeared o' either Captain or any gypsy tinker that breathes, you're mistaken,” said Pembury. “ I'm as good a man as they is, and better. I didn't kill my father when he was asleep !”

Something passed us quickly, a tall figure, dark against the sky, as Anna and I cowered lower behind the hedge of prickly-pear.

“ Stand up, Jim Pembury,” I heard the voice of Captain Stansfield, very clear and yet not loud. “ You never killed your father, did you not ? Well, you have a chance to kill a better man now. Stand up and fight it out for your life ! I might have you tied up and shot like a dog for the words you have spoken. If I gave the order, is there a man here would say me nay ? But I give you a chance, which is more than you deserve. Has he his knife, men ? Get over the hedge, the rest of you ! I will fight him in the dark who slanders in the dark. Are you ready, Jim Pembury ? Step out !”

But the man did not reply. Already he had dropped to the ground, and from where Anna and I crouched we could see him creeping round under the shelter of the hedge with intent to strike the first blow. It was a terrible moment. We were on the same side of the hedge, and he was crawling so closely that he could scarcely avoid touching either of us. Yet the prickly-pear hedge was full of keen spines, and it was impossible either to overleap it or to push through. So, though I suffered intense pain from the pricking, I pressed my back against the fleshy leaves and drew Anna down upon my knees, just as Jim Pembury came creeping softly round. He was so close in, that I thought he could not possibly

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escape seeing us. But he had eyes only for my father, who had never moved since he had spoken. I could see him still, black against the sky, making a blank among the thick-sown stars.

Every moment I expected to feel the liberty man's knife, and I wondered if it could hurt much more than the needles which were piercing my back and sides. But, just as Pembury poised himself for the rush, I felt something strike my foot. The crouching man stumbled and fell forward upon the stones and shingle, and with an oath and a ring of iron his knife went clattering out of his hands. The dark figure of Captain Stansfield vanished too quickly for our eyes to see what happened next. We heard only the sound of two heavy blows stricken in quick succession, a dull groan like that of a pole-axed ox, and then between us and the sky we saw once more the dark tall figure of the Captain. He was wiping a knife delicately, even as I had seen him do in the Blue Room at New Milns.

Then a hand fell on the collar of my shirt and I was lifted to my feet, Anna still in my arms.

"What is this?" said my father's voice. "More traitorous knaves? What! my son Philip night-lurking here among the hedges!"

"Jim fell over my foot, sir!" I stammered, without thinking what I had said.

"Aha, so, son Philip! Then I owe you that which I shall not forget! But now pray escort this young lady to your mother's house, and go you to bed. This is neither time nor place for either of you to be abroad."

So Anna and I walked slowly back to my mother's house, and found her sitting placidly at her stocking with an open Bible before her. She knitted steadily in the lamp-light and as if her fingers could not stop.

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But though she looked at the book I do not think she read much.

“You are too late out, Philip and Anna!” was all she said, as if we had been playing about the Yett House at “hi-spy” or marbles. “It is not altogether seemly!”

So for once in their lives my father and my mother were agreed upon a question of morals.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE "CORRAMANTEE'S" PRIZE

Our friend Yellow Jack always said that Captain Stansfield was not by any means the worst of the white men, and this somewhat qualified praise seemed to be the sense of all we could gather from the other slaves upon the island. Indeed, my father's own "boy," a fat rascal named Jacob, was looked upon by all as a very fortunate person, and was constantly in demand at every negro dance and Obeah festival on account of his supposed influence with his master.

Strangely, of late I also had begun to doubt the evidence of my senses, and to wonder if, indeed, what I had seen and heard in the Blue Room of New Milns could have been real. But soon I had other things upon my mind than speculation as to the particular tinge of crime upon my father's hands. At the best, their purity was by no means virgin.

In the morning the ships were both in the bay. They proved to be the *Corramantee* and another tall vessel of three masts, full rigged and capable of containing twice the number of men which manned the hermaphrodite schooner. But, though there were blanks in the muster-roll, and the second mate would never more bid a man wash his socks on board any earthly ship, there were no new faces; and it was obvious that the task of bringing the prize into port had been a difficult one. But now the liberty men swarmed on board, and in a

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trice the boats were going merrily to and fro between the ships and the beach, conveying provisions and plunder of all sorts. Saul Mark stood at the landing-place and examined every boat-load, to all appearance occupied in separating what was to be laid aside for future disposal from those articles which were to be divided immediately.

All provisions and munitions of war were sent to a common store. But, on the other hand, the men were allowed to keep small articles of private loot, such as watches and jewelry. (Where were the poor souls who had worn these?) Several wounded buccaneers came off in the first boat and sat about the shore, talking in low tones to their women-folk, and saying a word occasionally to their companions as they went jovially by. Yet all was carried out in so matter-of-fact and cheerful a way that I could not bring myself to believe that red slaughter had been done on the high seas; or that these men, who so cheerfully would give a neighbour a helping shoulder beneath his burden or cast sportive arms about the waists of a couple of giggling yellow girls, could be the bloody pirates and murderers the dead Pembury had represented them to be.

As usual, Captain Stansfield stood apart, neither associating with officers nor yet with men, but watching with keen eyes that every one did his duty.

The task of discharging the captured ship occupied a full week of wondrously hot weather. Some of the men worked stripped to their trousers, while others went about with nothing more upon them than a breech-clout. The sea was smooth as a mill-pond (ah! how I wished that I could have seen Umphray Spurway's!) all the time, and the boats went regularly out, and came as regularly back. I desired greatly to visit the captured

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ship, and I think that I might have succeeded in hiding in one of the outgoing boats. For the men were cheerful and good-humoured beyond their wont, partly with the rum that had been freely served, and partly with the prospect of the large dividend which each expected at the close of the discharge. But, just as the boat in which I was hidden started, Anna Mark came running down to the shore, crying, "Take me too!" For she had been delayed at some task for my mother, which irked her much because it kept her within doors.

As soon as her father heard Anna call, he bade the men cease from rowing.

"Who is that in the bow of the boat?" he hailed.

And when they told him, "Send the lad ashore!" he cried; "the ship is no place for him!"

Whereupon I told him that I had not wished to go aboard at all, but only went for the pleasure of the sail.

But he looked as if he had hard work to believe me, and made me disembark instantly. Then came my father by, and I saluted him, as I saw the others do, making bold to ask him if I could not go out with one of the boats to the ship. He shook his head, and passed on without speaking.

Yet Captain Stansfield had not gone far before he turned and said, "You can go to my quarters and get my great telescope. You may visit the ship through that."

I was overjoyed; and Anna and I started to get the glass at once.

Now, I had never been in the house where my father abode, and I would not at this time have been able to make my way within, had not lazy Jacob been out lounging upon the wall beneath—keeping all the while his eyes upon his master, so that at his return he might be found busily engaged about his own proper work.

THE "CORRAMANTEE'S" PRIZE

The great brass perspective glass was not in the little living room, where even the *débris* of my father's simple breakfast was not yet cleared away from the table by that good-for-nothing Jacob. The walls were hung round with swords, pistols, muskets, and other material of war, but nothing of the nature of a spy-glass could I discern.

Accordingly I pushed my way into my father's sleeping room. The bed was narrow and plain as a cabin bunk, the room wholly without ornament, save that, to my great surprise, I found the little picture of my mother which Umphray Spurway had had painted. It hung on the wall at the foot of my father's couch in such a position that it must have been the first object upon which his eyes lighted when he awoke. This I could in no wise understand, and I called in Anna to my assistance.

But the matter presented no difficulties to her.

"He must love her in spite of all," she said, with a true woman's belief in the eternity of the affections.

And from this she could not be driven, say what I would to shake her.

"He tried to kill her," I reminded her.

"For all you know," she retorted, "he may have aimed at some one else, and shot his wife by accident."

"He was cruel to my mother, and left her for another," I argued next.

"Well, he may be sorry for it now," she said. "His heart may have turned."

"His heart turned!" said I, mockingly; "after what we heard and saw last night!"

"Well, Jim Pembury tried to kill him," said the girl, quickly.

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“Why, Anna,” I cried, “what makes you defend him? I cannot understand it!”

“There is no great reason why you should,” she responded, acridly. “Get the telescope, and come out.”

At last I found the perspective glass in a cupboard, where were many old suits of clothes, together with a number of cutlasses, some naked and others hung up in their sheaths. I took the spy-glass under my arm and came away. My father still stood on the beach all alone and looked out to sea.

Anna and I found a commodious place of refuge on the cliff edge, and after examining the crevices of the rock for green scorpions and red ants, we laid us down and took turn and turn about at watching the ships with great delight. As the tide began to run inward the prize swung to her anchor, and I hoped at least to make out her name and destination. But in this I was disappointed, for the lettering had been carefully effaced; and I was not sailor enough to guess from her rigging and equipment anything even of her nationality. The men of the *Corramantee* were now taking out of her such large articles as spare spars, coils of rope, and bales of sail-cloth. The first of these they pitched overboard, to be drawn ashore; the latter they lowered into boats, all working with a will and as merrily as innocent harvest folk singing among the cornstooks on the bras of Moreham.

All that day Anna and I watched the work proceeding on shipboard, and marvelled at the celerity with which everything was cleared away. A little before dusk I took back the telescope and gave it into the hands of Jacob, who was now running about preparing his master's dinner with immense bustle and show of alacrity.

THE ‘‘CORRAMANTEE’S’’ PRIZE

It was about ten o'clock that I saw the beginnings of a wondrous sight. The ship which had now been completely dismantled, was towed to the entrance of the channel, and set on fire outside the bay. She seemed to have been drenched with some inflammable material, for the flames mounted with great rapidity, so that by the time I could run to Anna and throw up handfuls of the pebbles of the beach against her window, the fiery sheets were already licking the crosstrees, and the spidery tracery of her tackling stood out against a lurid background of smoke and flame.

I have never set foot on any vessel since without thinking of the terrible peril of fire at sea. In ten minutes the flames had burned through the thick planking of her sides. The ribs still showed black and solid, like those of some skeleton in hell-fire yet unconsumed. Presently she took ground on a reef, and canted over soon after. A secret store of powder concealed somewhere in her hold blew up with a tremendous explosion, heaving the masts high into the air.

I looked at Anna as she stood in her window, and saw her face crimsoned with the fiery glow.

“What think you now?” I said. “Does a picture over a bed make up for these things?” She had her answer ready.

“Your Bible says, if I read it right, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’!”

That was all she said. She did not even reach down her hand to bid me good-night, but shut the window and so went back to bed.

CHAPTER XXXV

DOG EAT DOG

NEVERTHELESS, I did not forget Yellow Jack's advice, that if we wished to leave the island we must provision the jolly-boat and prepare for a cruise of some length. On the beach that night I managed to "find" a firkin of butter, which all unseen I rolled to a snug place beyond the village. The negro also was on the look-out, and between us we secured some smoked hams, sufficient, with economy, to serve for several weeks, so that the question of food did not any more trouble us. What we now wanted was enough water to escape the greatest danger of all voyages in open boats—death by thirst.

It was three nights before we could find, and quite a week ere we could appropriate without suspicion, two small but beautifully coopered barrels which had contained some rare liqueur. I do not know whether or not these had been emptied before coming into the hands of our buccaneers, but I do know that all the time we kept water in them the taste which they communicated to the vapid luke-warm brew was exceedingly heartsome and pleasant.

Anna and I had spoken to my mother about our projects of escape, and we were soon to realise that one of our chief difficulties would be with her. I think that anxiety and mental terror had brought about a certain relapse into indifference and apathy.

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And, indeed, at this time my mother appeared to be less herself than I had ever seen her.

“Why escape at all?” she said. “Do you know where you will arrive?—Most likely among cannibals. And it is indeed very quiet and peaceful here. We have what we want to eat. If you are troubled outside, Philip, or if your house be not comfortable, come and bide with Anna and me. You can have Anna’s room, and she shall bring her bed in here beside me!”

So we resolved to say no more to my mother for the present, but when necessity arose to get her to accompany us to the boat upon a pretext. With this in view it became our practice to call her out in the evening and sometimes in the morning also, in order that she might become accustomed to walking with us. At first the astonished faces and ill-concealed admiration of the men on shore, and still more the curiosity of the black women who flocked about making very audible remarks upon the beauty of her complexion, almost made her turn back. But gradually she became accustomed to going with us, and after a while she began to like these little excursions, which broke the monotony of her day. Yellow Jack, too, and his hook were at first distasteful, but gradually she became as fond of him as we were. I think, however, she never trusted or liked his mother, whom the sailors called Witch Sally. She averred that the negress was very like a certain ancient Sarah Grisby, who in the sunnymeadows about Clieveden had wickedly cast the glamour upon herself “and one other,” as she said. Which made us judge that the “one other” must have been that young Master Will Lucy, the “Squire’s Master Will,” of whom Caleb Clinkaberry had spoken. And this thought took me back vividly to those terrible days after my mother’s hurt, and I wondered whether Caleb still abode at the old Yett

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House by the gate of New Milus, and, as he promised, kept the nest warm for our homecoming.

Anything served as a pretext for these walks of ours, which, however, never led us very far from the settlement. We wished also to accustom the liberty men and the buccaneers on shore to the sight of my mother wandering about in our company. But remembering the guard which had been set at either end of the hut, I could never be sure that we were truly alone, though I could never catch anyone in the act of following us.

It was a long while before we got any opportunity of carrying out our plans of escape, and indeed it was chance, and not any deep-laid plan, which ultimately gave us our liberty, or at least delivered us from our forced detention on the Isle of the Winds.

But, curiously enough, it was Will Bowman who set my mother's scruples at rest. She had always a great regard for Will. She never really liked Anna Mark, for reasons which have been indicated. But Will Bowman she looked up to as in some ways the representative of Umphray Spurway, whose will (save in one case) she always submitted to without a murmur. Me, indeed, she loved entirely, but thought of as no better than a boy and infirm of purpose—wherein she was completely wrong. Yet she "gaed her ain gait," so far as I was concerned, and would take neither doctrine nor reproof from me.

But Will she trusted, and after a while consulted as to many things.

Now Bowman, being a friendly active fellow and excellent with tools, worked with great acceptance in the carpenter's shop. He had a natural eye for a boat, and was of great use to the men there, who did well enough by

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rule of thumb, but had no head for drawing a plan or laying out a job.

It was Will, therefore, who brought us the first true word about the late prize, and it lightened my heart greatly to know that the ship had been no quiet merchantman, but an armed piratical vessel like our own. The *Corramantee*, indeed, had at first only defended herself, but after coming to close quarters the larger and stronger ship had been carried by the resolution of our men, led by Lambie, the fair-haired Scot from Tillicoultry.

But Will brought other news as well. It was not often that the men spoke before him about any of their communal or privateering subjects. But one day while he was in the ship fitting up some shelves he heard a couple of them talking together through a thin partition. They raised their voices to make themselves heard, and the subject of their converse reached Will Bowman with equal ease through another bulkhead.

From them we learned that the captured ship was one of three or four which had been sent out to raid the Central American towns, and that her consorts were expected to try for revenge upon the Isle of the Winds.

"I'm no feared o' ony consorts," said Job Bone, the carpenter, a Scot from Galloway. "There's no a man able to pilot a ship through the channels to the anchorage o' the Isle o' the Winds—except blackie wi' the Silver Rings!"

For so they called Saul Mark, whom at the same time they hated and admired.

"Nay, Job," quoth Dick Okell, a Lancashire lad, "thou art a rare one for believin'! What's to hinder them to land over there and eoom across to take us wheer a Scotch flea bites—in the back? Ha! ha!—Crack that bone, wilt tha?"

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"That I wull," cried the Galloway man. "First, then, they winna land ower there because the surf wad ding their bit boaties to flinders; secondly, they canna maireh across, because they couldna get through the woods; and, thirdly, they winna be able to set their course to the Isle. We're hidden in the secret places o' the sea, man—an' even the Almichty Himsel' wad hae a sair job to lay His finger on us!"

Will Bowman had been lying quietly listening. He had stopped his boring as soon as the men began to talk. But now he heard from above another voice which stopped the discussion, and answered Job Bone with dramatic appropriateness.

"Sail, ho!" cried the lookout from the crosstrees of the *Corramantee* with startling suddenness.

Will Bowman heard the men bound up to the deck with quick impulsive leaps. He could distinguish the clang of their tools as they dropped them on the plank-ing. He rose and followed with great quietness, shouldering his straw sack of tools as if he had just finished his job.

He found everything in confusion on board. Men were clambering up the shrouds and getting to the highest points of the masts which could be reached, in order to obtain the better view.

"How many may there be o' them?" cried Dick Okell to Job Bone, who had obtained a higher post of observation.

"There's three o' them—big boats and pilin' up fast wi' the trade wind!" cried Job.

"Faith!" returned Okell, "yo' might 'a been wrong, owd brid, but I wur noan in sich a hangment o' a hurry to han it proved!"

Signals were being freely exchanged with the shore,

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and in a few minutes Captain Stansfield and Saul Mark came on board with the full crew of the *Corramantee*. Saul at once noticed Will Bowman, and ordered him ashore. But my father said, "Let the lad stay till we have brought the ship as near the entrance of the reef as is safe. Then he can go ashore in the last boat."

And as nobody questioned his orders, so it was arranged. Whereupon who more helpful than Will?—At the getting up of the anchor, at the towing of the *Corramantee* by her boats, Will was as one of themselves, while all the time he had his ears open to the free and excited talk that went on about them. He heard that their chief enemy was a certain Captain Keys, who had been wounded on one occasion in a duel at the Dry Tortugas by Captain Stansfield, and had sworn revenge. Captain Keys, as they phrased it, had "played booty," and in some way had arranged matters with the Colonial Governments so that he was under protection of authority, though as rank a pirate as ever steered a keel through the Spanish Main.

His position gave him a great ascendancy over the other buccaneers, and so when the *Corramantee* captured one of the ships of his "tail" he had sworn revenge. There was not the slightest doubt that the three vessels in the offing were those commanded by Captain Keys, and that he had come to avenge the taking of our late prize.

Nothing was now heard save anathemas upon one who, having himself been a Brother of the Coast, had been guilty of discovering a refuge isle to the enemy, and even of taking service under Government. If the vessels had been His Majesty's ships of the line, all would have been quite fair. That was their business; but to be attacked by Captain Keys was quite a different matter.

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Will Bowman came ashore about four in the afternoon. By this time the *Corramantee* was stripped for fighting, and the guns were trained on the narrows of the passage, which were within easy range. Captain Stansfield had resolved to let the ships come on without opposition till they were well within the grasp of the reefs, knowing that there was no turning about among these intricate channels and dangerous knife-edges of sunken reef.

But the enemy's ships, which were now close in to the island, had evidently no intention of coming further at present, but contented them with firing a shot from the flagship at the *Corramantee*, which, however, fell far short, skipping among the outer reef bars like a flat stone jerked edgewise from the hand.

Of this direct challenge Captain Stansfield took no notice, but grimly awaited the development of the attack upon his stronghold.

When Will came on shore he found Yellow Jack and his mother waiting for him in great excitement. The time had come, Eborra declared. Never would there be a better chance. All the buccaneers were busy, and the attack upon the island would keep them on the alert for several days. For it was certain that so large a force would not abandon its purpose without making an attempt in some quarter.

Anna and I were, of course, ready for anything. But my mother was more difficult. Will Bowman departed to break the news to her, and before he went he asked me if I thought he might say that Umphray Spurway would assuredly be fitting out a ship to seek for us in the plantations, and that we would be sure to meet him there.

As the matter was urgent, and a lie in a good cause has, after all, something to say for itself, I thought that

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he might. Besides, it was not exactly a lie, for there was no doubt that Umphray Spurway would most certainly do what he could to find us.

So Will Bowman departed, and after an absence of more than an hour returned with the joyful intelligence that my mother would come with us gladly, provided that she was not required to sit beside the witch-woman who reminded her so strongly of Goody Grisby, the witch-woman of Great Marlow. This Will had promised readily enough, for we thought that we could stow away the light weight of the old negro woman in the bows without altering the trim too much.

But as a more imminent peril Will reported that the guards were still set over my mother's house, being two liberty men who had not gone aboard with the crew of the *Corramantee*, having been slightly wounded in the last encounter. This was a difficulty indeed; for my mother, being delicate of body and timid of spirit, could not make a dart for it, as any of the rest of us might have done. Besides, she was liable at any moment to stop short for the purpose of explaining to us why she could not go any faster, and in her English fashion to ask our pardon for it—which, though pretty enough to hear, would prove exceedingly fatal to our project.

But at this moment a plan came into my head which I mentioned to Will and Anna, who thought that it might be worked. This was, to keep Anna out in the woods, and to dress my mother in Anna's hooded mantle, in which she had often descended from the window at night to wander the beach with me. The sentinels were quite accustomed to this. Indeed, it had become a jest among them, and they had enough of good humour to keep the matter carefully from our respective fathers—who, though hardly straitlaced in their own conduct,

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might not have shown the same leniency towards the escapades of their children.

My mother was of about the same height as Anna, and if she could be kept from speech might very well pass for her. So with this plan to rehearse, Will went back into the pleasant and quiet room where my mother sat calmly at her knitting. At first she would not listen to a word.

What! Would she put on a child's cap and cloak? She might be in danger, but, thank God! she had garments of her own, which she could wear without being beholden to any. Besides, what would she wear afterwards? If, as he said, they should meet anyone who knew her in the plantations—it was not Anna Mark's cap and cloak that she would care to appear in. The shame would cause her to sink into the ground!

But Will reassured her by offering to smuggle anything she wished out for her. She went joyfully to make the bundle ready. It proved to be almost a boat-load of itself, and she was with difficulty advised to restrict herself to a cloak with a serviceable hood, a warm under-kirtle, and a slight muslin gown. These she selected from the vast store of women's clothes which Captain Stansfield had put at her disposal. Anna's sole baggage was a store of white kerchiefs.

It was curious how little thought my mother gave herself about some matters. But then she had always expected to be provided for, and took every gift as her due, having been an only child and (save in the matter of marriage) allowed her own way all her life. As for Anna Mark, she would not have touched a single bonnet-string of the pirate's hoard with a pair of tongs.

But my mother, on the other hand, was proud and satisfied, and indeed had spent a great deal of her time since

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we came to the Isle of the Winds in re-making and embellishing the wardrobe which she found ready for her use. I do not suppose it ever crossed her mind to ask who had worn the clothes before.

CHAPTER XXXVI

I ELOPE WITH MY MOTHER

So it was arranged, and to me the task of eloping with my own mother was committed. We waited till it was quite dark, and then, as was my custom, I began to hang about the house as if on the look-out for Anna. I spoke to both of the men on guard, whom I knew well. To one of them I presented a large piece of tobacco, which I asked him to divide with his knife and give a part of to his companion.

"Goin' a sweetheartin' to-night, young master?" he asked with a smile, after he had pouched the gift.

"I shouldn't wonder," I replied, kicking the ground as if embarrassed. "What is it to you, if I am?"

"Nothing to me," he laughed. "But what will the dad say, if he sees you? Put a ball in you, most like. You'd better keep friends with old Dick and me, or we will split on you, that we will!"

"You would not do that," I said. "Besides, I have a father, as well as Anna; he may chance to prove as useful to you as Saul Mark, any day!"

"Aye," said the man, "and that's as true as true! The Captain always comes out a-top, whoever goes under. Well, go on with your courtin'; I'll shut my eyes. I've sweethearted in my day, I have. Take care of that fool Dick, though; he's ticklish in the temper is Dick, and pulls his trigger easy!"

"Why not call him down to the hedge," I said, "as if

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to give him some of the tobacco? Ask for his lantern to cut it by. Yours has gone out, you know!"

And having made sure by bribery and corruption of one man, I opened his lantern and let the candle fall on the dew-wet ground, where it instantly went out with a fizz.

The sentry swore profusely at the accident. "Insolent young dog!" he called me, with other worse names.

Dick heard the noise at the farther end of the enclosure, and shouted out to know what the matter was.

"Hold your tongue and do what I say," I bade him under my breath, "and you will soon not need to mount guard any more. I promise you that, as soon as my father has settled with Captain Keys."

And, indeed, it was easy enough to promise, and would prove a fact, too, if we got my mother safe away. For there would be no more guard-mounting then.

"I've dowsed my candle, Dick," returned my friend; "come about the house and give me a light from yours. I have some tobacco, too, if you would like a quid!"

"I take that right friendly of you. I'm a-coming," said Dick.

As soon as I heard him tramping down from the back of the house I slipped away into the shadow.

"Seen anything o' that brat o' the Captain's?" growled Dick, as he directed the light of the lantern on his companion.

"Nix!" said my man, succinctly.

"He'll get a shot in his rear locker one of them nights, hanging about the house after that young wench o' Saul's!"

"He's after no harm, Dick," returned my friend; "didst never go after the girls thyself, Dick, when thou wast young?"

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"Aye, that were just the trouble," said Dick; "I went onst too often. But why should he have a maid as white as a lily when his betters have to put up with doxies as black as the pot?"

"Come, lad. They be all alike in the dark!" said the more easy-tempered sentry, "and thy old Dinah is a good sort. Aye, it would go hard wi' thee to part wi' her."

I left them talking, and was at the window in another moment. I dared not call "Mother," lest the sentries should hear; and I durst not say "Anna," as for appearance sake I ought, because I was certain my mother would not answer to that name. So being in a strait I whistled a low catch, and in a moment my mother was at the window.

I had her in my arms in another instant, and she felt no heavier than a partridge, so small and light a thing she was.

"Come," I whispered; "please do not speak a word. We will soon be in safety."

I could hear my man at the other side talking in a loud tone to conceal our movements, for he and his mate were so near he must have heard the window open.

"I think I see a light down on the shore," he said; "Dick, jump over the hedge and see if you can place it! Perhaps 'tis Captain's gig coming back with news!"

I heard Dick scramble over the prickly-pears with an oath, as he jagged himself even as I had done the night Jim Pembury ceased from troubling. My man, being after all faithful in his heart, flashed a lantern at us furtively behind Dick's back. The light dwelt a moment on Anna's hood and grey cloak, and then was shut off again. The sentry was perfectly satisfied. I was carrying my mother in my arms, whereat, I doubt not, the connoisseur in courtship chuckled.

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I hurried my burden into the bush, where Will and Anna already were waiting. We found Yellow Jack and his mother outside the settlement. And so, still more than half supporting my mother in my arms, and with Anna carrying a bundle and assisting as best she could, we set off in the direction of the jolly-boat.

It was lucky that the shore road was not a difficult one; at least, in comparison with that through the High Woods. But in passing through the great downthrow of boulders and fallen cliff the black lit a candle, which he carried in a kind of natural dark-lantern called a pot-lid plant.

It was with a sense of relief that we found ourselves at long and last in the little sheltered bay. The jolly-boat rocked gently beside its pier, in a dim kind of phosphorescence like moonlight seen through frosty glass. The mast was in its place, the sail ready for setting, but not a breath of wind blew.

I could have held the candle in my hand unprotected by any lantern, so still and breathless was the night. There was not a sound to be heard, except that a bird with a clear, short song like that of a Scottish robin trilled at intervals away out in the woods, and from the short grass a late cicada answered shrilly.

We placed my mother carefully in the stern, with Will Bowman beside her to steer, while in the bow Yellow Jack stood up to con the boat through the difficult passages. Anna and I were to pull or back-water as we were bidden. We made for the entrance of the little harbour, and as soon as we escaped out of the loom of the land it grew a little brighter around us, so that we could see the reefs black on either side. We were puzzled, however, by a muffled hum, which was not the surf on the beach, but which carried a suspicion of something mys-

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terious and human in it. People seemed to be whispering all about us.

But gradually we made our way into opener water, Eborra dipping his oar softly and alternately like a paddle on either side the bow. Anna and I rowed as he signed to us, and in this fashion we drifted rather than moved towards the outer sea. So far all had been favourable, and we kept well to the left, so that, as soon as we rounded the point, we should be out of sight even of the lookout on the topmasts of the *Corramantee*.

When once we had made sure of that, we breathed more easily. For the dawn was beginning to break, and a lucent pear-shaped Eye of the Morning began to form on the horizon where the sun was to rise.

"Surely the reefs extend a long distance out in this direction?" whispered Will to Yellow Jack.

The half-caste did not reply. He was gazing seawards with a fixed and horrified attention.

The light now rapidly increased. The seeming reefs resolved themselves into nearly a score of heavily manned boats, which had been lying waiting, like ourselves, for the day-breaking. They were not more than half a mile from us. There was not a particle of wind to help us to escape them. They were a little longer in seeing us, for we were still within the dark shadow of the land; but we had not time to turn back before the sun rose. We were instantly spied, and with a unanimous yell the oars dipped into the water and the nearer boats dashed at us.

"Captain Keys' pirates! We are lost!" I think the cry came with one accord from all within the jolly-boat. In escaping from one trap we had fallen into another far more terrible. For, they said, these freebooters gave

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no quarter, and even our "Corramantees" shuddered as they spoke of their cruelties.

The oars dropped from our hands. We were paralysed by the very impossibility of doing anything. The wind was dead still, and there was no time to set the sail even if it had blown like all the Roaring Forties. For me, I could not even pray.

Yet I ceased gazing at the approaching enemy who were making their boats surge through the water, in order to watch the weird figure of the black Witch Woman standing with her hands outstretched over the prow, as if invoking some demon of her own out of the ocean deeps.

And even as I did so, at first slowly and mysteriously, and then faster and faster, the jolly-boat began to move through the water. We sat dumb and silent, understanding nothing of what was happening, while the old hag gesticulated and laughed in triumph in the bow, now looking down into the sea, and anon straightening herself up to shake her fist and wizened arm at the approaching enemy.

And thus began a chase as strange and terrible as any I have found written of in any book, since the rebellious prophet was cast into the sea and the great fish sped towards Nineveh with Jonah in its belly.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE DEVIL-FISH

I, PHILIP STANSFIELD the younger, have in my time been in many strange places, some of more instant and dreadful peril than that in which I found myself that tropic summer morn. But there is nothing in all my life which I think of half so often or remember so acutely. I will try in a word or two to picture it forth.

We were still in a belt of shadow by the shore edge, which, however, every moment grew smaller as the sun rose. Northward the sea basked, clear and calm as a mirror to the horizon, save where about our jolly-boat it dimpled, bubbled, and boiled, as with the unseen rush of a myriad of great unknown creatures underneath the water. We heard the dull resonance of a cannon-shot come over the sea, and a wave seemed to rush upon us out of the narrows of the channel which led to the anchorage of the Isle of the Winds. Anna Mark and I had already dropped our useless oars as the pirate boats converged upon us. They were so near that we could see the naked glistening backs of the men as they bent to their oars, making the water foam from the bows. We could discern the bearded chins of Captain Keys' red-capped officers as, seated in the stern, they directed their boats upon us.

In the first access of terror my mother had dropped limp and helpless into the bottom of the boat, murmuring only "Did I not tell you? Would that you had

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listened to me!" Will Bowman was bending to lift her up. Lying at full length Eborra looked over the stern, watching with a strange eagerness the boiling swirl which seethed around our boat. In the bows the witch-wife stood erect, and laughed as she waved her hands like one who in her cantrips can call up spirits from the vasty deep.

"Aft—aft! Go aft!" cried Eborra, suddenly.

Anna and I both obeyed without question, and in a moment more we had unshipped our oars and were seated in the bottom of the boat at the feet of my mother and Will.

The bows of the jolly-boat had been pulled almost to the surface of the water, but our movement somewhat relieved the pressure. When we had time to look about, we found that we were now rushing due north, with a white wing of spray curling up at either side of us, and leaving behind an undulating wake of creamy foam that stretched back apparently to the shore itself.

"What is it?" I asked of Eborra, who still peered over the side downwards into the water with the same look of pride and alert curiosity.

"Devil-fish!" he answered, with a kind of impatience in his voice, "a school of devil-fish—one has caught hold of our anchor chain!"

"But this is rank witchcraft," I cried; "this is the blackest of black magic!"

Eborra shrugged his shoulders.

"It is my mother," he said, as if the explanation were sufficient; "my mother and Obeah—Obeah always great magic!"

Even as he spoke we were forging rapidly ahead, keeping the middle of the water-lane between the mangrove thickets on the shore edge and the approaching line of

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our enemies. These all at once stopped their rowing, when they saw us moving through the water without sails or oars, for the fear of witchcraft was strong upon them. It was not indeed until we were almost out of range that they recovered themselves, and sent a volley after us, which whipped the water astern in white spirts, but did us no damage whatever.

I glanced cautiously over the side of the boat, following the direction of Eborra's eyes, and there, not three fathoms beneath the keel, I saw a huge shadowy shape—a whitish rounded snout which vanished into the filtered haze of light ahead, and great bat-like wings that undulated and flapped on either side and extended far out into the sea. I could just catch a glimpse of a similar monster rushing along on my left, keeping touch with that which was dragging our boat, as soldiers do on a Place of Arms. But already our pursuers had had enough.

We could see the leading boats of Captain Keys' fleet swerve and turn about as on a pivot so soon as the wave caused by the passage of these huge sea-creatures heaved them from stem to stern, and the seethe of the bubbles broke milky all about their oar-blades. To them the thing was even more mysterious than to us. For none of them knew what impelled us forward, or that a school of "devil-fish," frightened probably by guns and rockets fired by the *Corramantee*, had, according to their custom when alarmed, rushed seaward in a body with sufficient fury to raise a wave almost like the "bore" of a tidal estuary.

One of these had caught the anchor chain of our boat in the pair of horny arms which grow from its snout. This great sea-beast was now rushing northward with us. What Eborra's mother had to do with the matter,

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or whether the whole was simply an accident, I have never yet wholly made out.

During my later and longer sojourn in these lands I have seen many of these creatures, though perhaps none quite so large as that which now sped seaward with us out of the grasp of our enemies. The "devil-fish" of these Western seas is simply a great ray or skate, as large in spread of wing as the weaving-room at Umphray Spurway's, and of such a fierce and sullen temper that what thing soever they seize that they will hold to till they are torn to pieces. But to my tale.

As the last ineffectual shots from the muskets of our enemies whipped the water behind, the black witch woman turned her about in the bows, and in a strange guttural language railed upon and cursed our pursuers. For by her fierce gestures this is clearly what she was doing, though not a word could I understand.

We were now far enough out to include in our view the three ships which had come to attack the Isle of the Winds and also the tall masts of the solitary *Corramantee* guarding the inner reef passages. The boats had apparently given up the attack for that morning, after their fruitless chase of us, and were now beginning to make their way back to the ships. Signals fluttered from the topmasts of the flagship, and we saw the white smoke spout from her side as a gun was fired by Captain Keys in token of recall.

In half an hour we were safe from all pursuit so far as the pirate boats were concerned. The Isle of the Winds itself was sinking slowly into the sea as we receded. In two hours we saw only the High Woods stand up darkly against the sky. By mid-afternoon even these had grown grey and indefinite in the heat haze. But still the great fish which had clasped our anchor chain

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lashed and threshed its way turbulently onward through the water, gleaming beneath the boat in flashes of fitful phosphorescence as the light began to fade. This "devil-fish" (or monstrous ray, as I now know the fish to have been) must have measured at least forty or fifty feet across. Far out on either hand we could catch anon a gleam of chilly white, as the under side turned half over, anon a glimpse of a huge flat head. In front seen over the bows of the boat, stalked eyes glared at us through the creamy green of the backward-rushing water, with the devilish suspicion of a sneer. Looking behind, between my mother and Will, Anna and I could discern a long serpentine tail, twining and thrusting its way through the still water.

My mother, to whom it was not much more strange that the boat should move of itself than that it should move at all, was not greatly frightened. Indeed, not nearly so much as she would have been had she discovered a mouse in her bedroom. Will Bowman arranged some cloaks for her in the bottom of the boat. On these she lay down, willing enough to be carried away from the Isle of the Winds, and yet somewhat regretting the quiet of the parlour, the impracticability of her afternoon siesta, and most of all the fact that in her haste she had forgotten to bring her knitting-needles.

The night fell upon us shortly—a tropic night, brilliant with stars overhead, the water quiet all about, save where it bubbled and heaved with the tumultuous passage of the mighty sea beasts. The air was mild and soft—as we say in Scotland, "lown-warm." By this time I had overcome the first great terror which had taken possession of me when I saw the terrible devil-fish threshing and wallowing beneath us, carrying the boat none of us knew whither. Anna showed no terror at all, save so

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much as might have been evinced by a tighter clasp upon my arm. As for Will Bowman, he said nothing; but steered as best he might with an oar, though it was little he could do to change or modify the direction of the strange charger on whose back (or at least above it) we were riding.

"When will it let go?" I asked Eborra, as I saw the one-armed lad come gliding back from the boat's stem, where his mother lay crouched, prone like a toad, with only her head over the boat's edge, watching the devil-fish waving like a fiery banner beneath. She was mumbling something in her barbarous jargon. Indeed, the only sounds which broke the stillness were the backward rush of our wake and the monotonous, insistent mutter of the witch's incantations.

"Jack," I whispered again, more anxiously (for apparently he had not heard me), "will it ever let go?"

But the negro seemed more careful to approve his dignity than to set my mind at rest.

"Here I am no more Yellow Jack," he answered sharply. "I am Eborra, of the blood of kings!"

"Well then, Eborra," said I, willing enough to humour him, "will the beast ever let go? Can we not fright it somehow? Are we not being carried out to sea, where we may all perish of hunger and thirst?"

"In the morning, about the time of the false dawn, he will let us go," Eborra answered, without looking at me, like one who gives superfluous information to a troublesome child.

"We are running due north," said Will Bowman, as he looked upwards. He had learned from Umphray Spurway something of the stars.

By this time my mother was asleep, and even Anna, after drowsing once or twice, allowed her head to drop

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down on my shoulder, where I drew my cloak about her, and was well content to let her rest. For me I had no thought or desire of slumber. That which was happening about me was too strange and entrancing. It is curious that one naturally so timorous as I, should yet be able to pass outwardly unshamed through so many and so various perils. Perhaps it was because I had in me something of my father as well as the heritage of my mother's weaker nature.

This is the way it ever was with me. If I were told of a peril beforehand, I would tremble all over and be utterly unmanned. But when one arrived, as it were, in the way of business, or sprang out upon me suddenly (as from a trap the tongue of which is touched), why, then a kind of cold indifference took hold of me. I had been lucky before, I said to myself. So would I be again. This passed gradually into a feeling entirely rejoicing, almost triumphant, especially when I had Anna Mark in my company. For, indeed, her presence and the need of protecting her (not always very evident) steadied me like a draught of strong wine.

Now I lay watching the stars and listening to the rushing of our boat through the water. By moving slightly I could let Anna rest more easily on my shoulder, and at the same time watch the great fish darting tirelessly along underneath us. The jolly-boat did not always advance at the same speed or even in the same direction. And it may have been imagination or reality, but true it is—that whenever Eborra's mother, crouched prone in the stem like an infernal figurehead carved in densest ebony, thrust out a hand to right or left, I seemed to see the great devil-fish swerve from its course, like a horse that answers the bridle.

And at this a shiver ran through all my bones, and

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even Anna, lying warm and soft against my shoulder, could hardly bring back the heat to my heart.

So all through the night we swept on and on. The water about us swayed and slept as it had been a child's cradle hooded by a vault of stars. We were no more the centre of a whole school of the demon-fish. The rest had long ago stayed their course or turned aside. But this one, devil-possessed or compelled by some dour resolution of its own nature, rushed onward tirelessly. Now it slackened a little, and anon started forward again with a sudden tightening jerk, which brought the heart into the mouth, as with a plunging surge the bows of the jolly-boat were pulled well-nigh underneath the water.

I might have thought that Will Bowman also slept, had it not been for the occasional dip of his steering-oar, which, however, for the most part he let trail behind him, useless as a duck's broken wing.

"It is nigh to the hour of the *zombis*!" said Eborra behind me, speaking in a whisper with his lips close to my ear.

"And what are the *zombis*?" I asked him softly, without moving, for I could not alter my position for fear of disturbing Anna.

"They are the spirits of the dead," he answered solemnly. "They come when my mother calls them. It is they who have entered into the devil-fish; soon they will depart. You shall see!"

So in a kind of quivering awe, which may have been partly the effect of the chill of the night and partly the wind caused by our rapid transit, I waited. The speed of our boat seemed to grow greater. I could see the two smooth wing-like jets of water from our bows stand up six inches at least above the planking. We had assuredly all gone to the bottom had our jolly-boat been of the

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ordinary sort. But she was exceedingly broad in the beam, and shed the waves freely to either side of her, most like a bluff-bowed sea-coal barque from Newcastle plunging round the Nore with the wind stiff at her tail.

I knew not what I expected to see, but at all events I was ready for any spectral manifestation. Yet the *zombis* delayed. A strange unnatural light, changing from pale green to livid red, rose out of the sea ahead of us. We heard a roaring behind us, like a mighty wind among the trees of the forest, whereat Anna awoke with a start of fear and looked up in my face, crying, "What is it, Philip? What is it?"

"Look! look!" answered Eborra, pointing behind us—as it were, over Will Bowman's shoulder. The stars, twinkling many-coloured through the dewy tropic night, were blotted out by a dark, peaked shape that advanced rapidly upon us, pushing a black cloud upward to the zenith. An uneasy wind awoke and blew in furious sudden-ceasing gusts this way and that. Yet still we sped on and the dark mass pursued us.

"It is a waterspout! God help us!" groaned Will Bowman, pulling the hood further over my mother's head that she might not see.

"Do not fear," answered Eborra; "it also is Obeah!"

Even as he spoke the dark mass appeared suddenly to divide and to pass on either hand of us. Then for the first time I perceived that as it went the sea ridged itself upwards in its path and then sank again like a whipped dog. The old witch woman had risen to her feet now, and stood as she had done at the first blotting-out of that strange changeful band of light to the north. The jolly-boat lay, as it were, in an eyot of oily black water, while all around were roaring floods and fickle tormented water.

The twin dark shapes swept past as swiftly as if we

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had been standing still. All was whirling vapour about them, and they looked most like a pair of gigantic hour-glasses spinning like a boy's top about to fall. And as they had divided behind us, so the waterspouts (if indeed such they were, and not demons of the deep raised as the witch of Endor raised Samuel out of the abyss) began to approach each other ahead of us. It seemed as if we must rush upon them to our destruction.

Then Eborra also stood up, and with his face all shining with the ruddy light out of the north he too held up his arms. I could see the iron hook sharp and black against the bright sky.

"Hear us, great Voodoo, chief snake of the world," he cried; "hear us, spirit of power! We are thy priests, thy *papiloi*! Let the spirits of the dead return to their place!"

Then suddenly with a flare that blinded us the levin bolt leapt from cloud to cloud. The thunderclap deafened our ears. The black hour-glasses sank down as by magic. And out of a heaving sea of milk, curdled on the top with winking foambells, there seemed to rise strange shapes that floated upward and hovered and vanished. Bat-like they were, and yet curiously human in suggestion. We watched them open-mouthed.

"They are but mist or spray from the falling of the waterspouts!" murmured Will Bowman, speaking as if to reassure himself. For so the Englishman had taught him to regard ghostly things. But even I knew better.

"We thank thee, Voodoo! Great and worthy shall thy sacrifice be!" cried Eborra, still standing up, erect as a spear stuck in the ground, though the boat was now heaving over the suddenly raised waves of the milky sea.

Then Eborra turned to Will Bowman.

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“Steer,” he said, imperiously, as if he had been the master of us all; “keep her head to the north!”

I looked over the side. The boat was no more rushing along with the double jet of spray whimpering from her bows. She lay heaving idly on the creaming sea of curd, and trembling a little all over like a horse which has run a hard race.

“The devil-fish is gone!” I cried joyfully.

“The spirits have departed upwards, and the beast is gone to his own place!” answered Eborra.

I looked again at the witch woman. She had bent herself over the verge and was now pulling in, hand over hand, the anchor chain she had let down in the morning when we were pursued by the pirates’ boats.

And as she hauled in the dripping slack she laughed—a laugh hard and metallic as the rattling of the links which fell from her hand into the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE CHAIN GANG

WHEN the true morning broke we saw before us the end of our sea adventure. Directly in front the blue and purple mountain ranges of a continent or great island rose out of the ocean. To east and west the shore-line extended, edged with an endless line of surf, save only where some cavern bit a hole in the white sea roller, and sent forth in token of victory a noise like the lowest notes of a trumpet.

The sun shone on a pallid company when he set his fiery forehead above the ocean. Only my mother was at all like herself. She awoke later than the rest of us, having slept soundly through the night. She sat up, blushing like a girl to find herself in the presence of so many, and as by instinct her hands went upward to her hair. I think she conceived that its braids might have been disordered by the hood of the cloak in which it had been nestled.

"I crave your pardons," she said gently; "are we nearly home?"

I know not whether she had a vision of Great Marlow and the pleasant woods of Cliveden over against it, or whether she thought of our little whitewashed house at the quay corner of Abercairn. Most likely, however, she was only dazed with sleep and uncertain what she said, speaking at random with being so suddenly awakened.

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Will Bowman helped her up to a seat beside him, where she could feel the soft fanning breath of the trade wind.

"We are near land!" he answered; "the peril of the night is quite passed away!"

"What peril?" she asked with surprise. For, indeed, she knew of none.

"The devil-fish is gone," he said quietly; "you are quite safe."

"I am hungry," she answered, speaking more than ever like a child.

And I think her words reminded all of us that it was many hours since we had touched sustenance of any kind.

Then it was that Eborra became again the man he had been aforetime—quick, silent, and serviceable. He was here and there with dried meat (which he shaved thin with his knife), rye bread, and the milk of the cocoanut served in half of its own shell. Eborra had waited on everyone before he would consent to bite a crust himself.

As for the witch-wife, she lay in a seeming trance in the bows of the boat, her head on a small coil of rope, and the end of the chain, all chafed and polished, still clasped in her hand.

Suddenly my mother paused, with a bit of bread half-way to her lips.

"We have not said a blessing!" she cried, "and after what we have gone through! Shame on you, Philip. Say a grace at once!"

But being taken at a short and having a great chunk of *bucan* (or dried West India meat) between my jaws, I could think on nothing except the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, and I knew well that would not serve me. So I only choked, and was silent. At the same time

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Will Bowman had great trouble with his steering-oar, turning him about and looking over the stern of the boat.

“Think shame of you all,” my mother cried, shaking one slender forefinger at us; “you are not thankful to a merciful Providence. I will e’en say the blessing myself!”

And with that she bowed her head and did so.

Eborra, with a curious look on his face, uncovered him of his broad-brimmed palmetto hat, and we (that is, Will and I) awkwardly enough followed his example.

Then, with a reproving stare round at us all, my mother went on with her breakfast, only complaining a little of the taste of the water, which, as I have said, had been put fresh from the spring upon the Isle of the Winds into the two foreign liqueur casks we had stolen from the beach.

Then after this we fell to our oars, and made good progress towards the land. The water still heaved after the storm of the night, but the milky and curded appearance was clean gone. Only a slight cloudiness in the blue of the sea reminded us of the perils we had passed.

The coast lay before us very plain to be seen. It seemed as if we must reach it in an hour. Yet it was late afternoon before we passed the islands which guarded the entrance to the harbour. Two great cliffs stood up on either hand, bare and steep to the top, save for the strange growths, tufted and prickly, which clung to every crevice and drooped from every crag.

Each one of us expected to see a settlement within as we glided through the opening, but when we rounded the last point none appeared. The bay was girt by the unbroken wall of the tropic forest. We had left behind us the rollers thundering ceaselessly on the outer cliffs.

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Within the narrows of the strait these still moved forward with an oily motion, spreading gently into a fan-shape as the harbour opened itself out.

As we entered this place and saw the free wind-blown Carib sea shut behind us, a greater fear fell upon our company than had possessed us when we were being towed we knew not whither by the devil-fish.

A strange silence brooded all about us. The drumming of the breakers upon the reefs dulled itself into a far-away sough. There was not a breath of air. It was a relief when a huge humble-bee, six times the size of those about New Milns, blundered into the boat, and then clumsily blundered out again, booming away, undismayed and lusty, towards the green forest wall.

We looked about for some landing-place, but for a while saw none. Everywhere a tangle of roots and leaves, creepers and twining vines grew riotously down to the edge of the water. The waves hissed and sucked among the slimy mangrove stilts, upon which in hideous array sat thousands of horrid vultures, motionless, as if they too were part of inanimate Nature.

Such was my mother's horror of these foul birds, which sat with drooping wings in strained attitudes upon the green-slimed roots and bedropped rotting branches, that nothing would do but we must pull out again and follow the curves of the shore, seeking for another and more cheerful landing-place.

At last Eborra, who had gone to the stem of the jolly-boat, pointed with his hook.

"Enter there," he said; "a boat has passed that way not long ago."

The place, to our unaccustomed eyes, certainly did not look promising. It was merely a low broad ditch choked with green vegetation. Grey mud-banks sloped down

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to the water's edge, and there was a smell of rotting leaves everywhere about.

"That is fresh water!" said Eborra.

And soon we were pushing our way, Will Bowman and I, through the rustling leaves of the water-lilies, which, all twitching with life, pulled as eagerly away from us. Several times the boat was brought completely to a standstill, but Eborra leaned over and detached us with his hook. In a quarter of an hour we were free, emerging into a clear amber-coloured creek bordered by solemn aisles of cypress trees.

Suddenly Anna Mark gripped my arm with one hand and pointed forward with the other.

"Look! look! Philip; there is a man!" she whispered eagerly.

I looked as I was bidden, and there, sure enough, at the end of a trodden path which ended in a little landing-place, between tufts of the plant known as "Spanish bayonets," stood a man as tall of stature and grey of beard as though he too had grown up along with the cypress trees and had acquired some of the grey moss which clings like mist about their branches.

Now in all my life I had never seen anything resembling this man, yet instantly I knew him for a Popish monk. He was beyond the stature of ordinary men, bareheaded, and wrapped from head to foot in a long brown robe with a cord knotted loosely about his waist.

Instinctively we turned the bow of the boat towards the place where the man stood, and, as we came near, Will hailed him in English.

"Can we land here?" he asked.

But the man made no reply, continuing to gaze fixedly at us as we advanced.

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Then Eborra stood up and said something in a language sweet and melancholy of sound, which I guessed to be Spanish. And at this the man slowly lifted his hand and pointed to a low bank, as if to guide our boat thither.

Eborra continued to speak as we approached, and soon we were alongside. Will leaped out first, and I helped my mother to land upon a small pier of shell-marble. She, however, was so cramped with long sitting still that she would have fallen if Will had not caught her in his arms. Whereat very pleasantly she smiled and thanked him.

The rest of us sprang out one after the other, but, before coming on shore himself, Eborra handed out his mother up into my arms.

I was astonished when I took hold of her. The old woman seemed hardly heavier than a bird trussed for the table.

When I had set her down I looked round, and lo! there was my mother on her knees before the priest or monk or whatever he was, and his hands were stretched out over her head. Which made me very unreasonably angry. For I might have remembered that my mother had few of my religious advantages, having been brought up among Episcopians, who after all are little better than Papists. As for me, thank God, I would not kneel to any Pope or Papist living.

Then the monk, still without speaking, watched us tie up the jolly-boat, and motioning us with his hand he turned him about and stalked up the path between the tall sentinel tufts of "Spanish bayonets."

And now there wafted across us the sound of a pleasant thing—the ringing of bells far away in the silence of the wood. And it came to our ears sweetly and sol-

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emly, like the first Psalm sung in the kirk on a summer sacrament morn.

We followed our guide in order. First went Will and my mother—Will supporting her with one arm and fending off from her with watchful eye and ready hand the prickly plants which flourished on either side the way. I followed next with Anna. Then came Eborra and his mother.

As we proceeded, the sound of bells grew louder and somewhat less mellow. Then after a quarter of an hour we began to arrive. First there appeared a wide clearing in the forest. Bearded pines and cypresses had been felled, and instead of them young live-oaks whispered in friendly fashion, like companions who take each other's arms to tell their secrets.

Across this open glade we marched straight upon a stretch of lofty wall, lichened like the trees, and already weather-worn and ancient. This barrier was flanked with towers, in which the mouths of cannon made little black O's full of purposefulness. Then came a low door, but our guide did not open it. Instead he turned to the left and skirted the long featureless boundary wall, in which there appeared only here and there a crucifix or a little shrine of the Virgin, gay with fresh paint and gilding.

At the first break in the wall we turned to the right, passed through a sort of stockade, and found ourselves in a street crowded with small wooden booths and tinkling with the ring of hammers upon anvils.

Our guide strode on, and we followed. But we had not gone far when a cry went up, and we began to hear the tread of feet hurrying towards us from every direction, and to see many people running and crying to each other. Some of these were casting off blacksmiths'

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aprons, that they might run the faster. Some (these were women with dusky faces) shrilly bade their men folk wait for them till they could come—or so at least I interpreted their querulous shoutings.

By this time we had become the centre of a throng of quaint dresses, whose wearers pushed and strove and elbowed about us. But our guide swept his staff to right and left, smiting them with the soundest of thwacks. Whereupon they fell hastily back, one treading on the toes of another.

Presently we stopped before a gate, or midway between two gates facing each other at the distance of rather more than a hundred yards. Our guide turned to that on the left hand, and we followed him.

He lifted a knocker shaped like a crucifix and knocked loudly. A wicket opened in the little door at the side of the larger gate, and a face looked through—a face which might have been that of a marble knight upon a tomb, so strong and purposeful it seemed. For the brow was hidden in a white napkin, as though bound up for the grave, and from the dead pallor of the skin large dark eyes looked forth mournfully and hopelessly.

The monk said something in a low tone, and stood aside to let the guardian of the portal see us. Then the little wicket shut to again, and behind us we heard the buzzing murmur of the crowd and the silent breathing of many folk.

We stood there for what seemed a long space, the westering sun throwing our shadows tall and black on the blazing whiteness of the wall.

Then the little window was again opened, and this time another face was seen; also a pale face, and enwrapped with the same mournful swaddlings. But the

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features were more delicate, and a certain quick frailty of temper had thinned the nostrils and drawn furrows across the brow. Our guide bent courteously and began to speak. Then there ensued between them a long whispered colloquy. When this was finished, the monk turned to us and said something in Spanish which I did not understand.

"We are to retire, you and I and he," Eborra translates briefly, pointing last at Will Bowman.

With much regret, and because we are helpless among so many, I let Anna go from my side, and left the three women standing together. The monk himself also stepped back, with a bow low as a reverence before an altar.

Then I heard the pallid woman behind the grating begin to speak in a quiet and pleasant voice, and Eborra's mother muttering replies in Spanish. But the words were inaudible to me, even had I understood the language.

Then the door opened, and first the old witch woman entered, then my mother—who was so dear to me—and lastly, Anna.

As the door shut upon the three I started forward, as if to go in too, but Eborra laid his hand upon my arm, and the monk motioned us impatiently to follow him. He turned into the gateway to the right, uttered a word through a barred wicket, and in a moment more we found ourselves within the great walled enclosure of the monastery of San Juan de Brozas.

And to a Northern boy the wonder of it—the hourly growing surprise! I saw scores upon scores of brown-clad monks moving here and there, their dismal array laced and beaded with black-robed priests, white acolytes, and boys wearing purple undervests of silk. Curi-

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ously enough, I thought first of what Mr. John Bell would say to a sight like this.

This monastery of Saint John of Brozas was built throughout of a stone like coral—hard, white, and a little crumbly; its form a great oblong. At one end, that opposite to where we had entered, rose the church. The rest of the enclosure was galleried and arcaded about. Shade trees sprang everywhere. Fountains spouted and plashed. Little streams were crossed by bridges small as a child's toy. The white walls were so aglow with the airy scarlet of creeper, so crowded with close-ranked geranium that it seemed as if many cardinals' robes had been hung out to dry. Beyond the palmettos in the square, through whose leaves we caught the glint of metal, they were building something huge and white. I could see a long string of men carrying mortar in wooden boxes on their shoulders. The fierce sun sparkled upon something that connected the files and swung in mid-air between them, while to our ears came the faint tinkle of metal. *The men were chained together.*

At that moment from the gable of the church (a beehive-like prominence of which formed the belfry) a bell began to ring, and we heard the low chant, the words of which seemed to begin with "*Ora pro nobis! Ora—*" And I recalled enough of my Latin to know that that meant "Pray for us!"

Still we followed our guide, passing close by the chain gang. We now saw that the men were guarded by swarthy musketeers, each with a gun over his shoulder and a sword girt by his side. Gigantic negroes, armed with whips, stalked along the ranks with the dignity of Neros cut in ebony.

Will Bowman had fallen a little behind with Eborra, so I hastened to place myself beside the monk who had

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brought us thither. The hymn had put it into my head that I would try him with some of my scanty Latin.

"Who are these men?" was what I tried to say.

He stopped in an astonishment as great as if his ass had spoken to him.

"You are a cleric?" he said. And though he pronounced the words differently, yet I understood him well enough. Whereat I began to be glad that Umphray Spurway had made me learn by heart George Buchanan's Latin Psalms, one short one each day for a whole year, which he declared to be the only worthy literature that Scotland hath ever produced.

"No, I am no cleric," I replied.

It was wonderful (so I thought) how easily the speaking of Latin came to me! And on the spot I began to plume me on my talent for languages.

"Convent-bred, then?" he continued, glancing sideways down at me.

"I am not," said I.

"How, then, do you speak Latin?"

I pointed silently to Will, who had come up with Eborra. We had halted under a tree, and there was now only a fountain with many jets between us and the chain gang. The swaying leaves and the hush of the water falling softly on wet marble were certainly most soothing. But somehow that continuous tinkle of swinging links over by the new building misliked me greatly. Also, I was anxious about my mother.

The monk, on whose face there appeared never the shadow of a smile, bowed to Will.

"You are learned?" he said, in the same curious Latin.

Will modestly denied it, but I struck in boldly.

"He is a very learned scholar," I said.

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“Of this I will inform the Abbott,” he said, and again turned to precede us. But I pointed to the gang of labouring prisoners, from the far end of which had just come a sharp cry, as the knotted lash of the black overseer’s whip fell across the naked shoulders of a lad halting under a burden. I trembled to kill the brutal striker.

“Who are these?” I said indignantly; “and by what law are they chained and beaten? Are they murderers?”

The monk cast one contemptuous glance, and one only, in the direction of the chain gang.

“These are heretics,” he said, as if the fact explained all.

And as I followed the trailing skirt of his brown robe (not daring to raise my eyes, lest I should see some further horror) I was by no means so sure that the devil-fish had done us a good turn in delivering us from the pirates and bringing us from the Isle of the Winds to underlie the tender mercies of the monks of the monastery of San Juan de Brozas.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE GRAND INQUISITOR

"His Excellency the Grand Inquisitor!" announced the tall priest who had hitherto conducted us, and whom we afterwards knew as Brother Pedro.

A small, apple-cheeked, pale-eyed man entered, smiling and dimpling, almost in the manner of an antiquated beauty. His head was thrust a little forward, like a bird's about to peck, and the scanty hair fringing it was a faded yellow hue, and fell in a meek frill about his ears. There was nothing really Spanish or Grand Inquisitorial about him. He looked more like a fawning debtor who arrives to ask an extension of time from a stony-hearted creditor.

"You have come"—he spoke a curious, halting English—"from the sea—with three womans you have come. Sirs, you are welcome to San Juan de Brozas."

"You are the Abbot of the monastery?" I spoke before Will could find words. For talking to Anna had taught me quickness of speech.

"I am not the Abbot. I am Grand Inquisitor. From Palos I have come with three hundred heretics in one galleon, that they may work in the plantations for the good of their souls! Then, if they do not repent, we will take other measures!"

"But, most reverend, you speak English?" I suggested.

He smiled, seemingly well enough pleased.

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“I have been long time in your country, spreading the Holy Religion! First with James the King, and afterwards (in much persecution and peril) under the Dutch heretic William! But, alas! I have much forgot. I speak him not well!”

Nevertheless, in spite of his modest disclaimers, he smiled like a boy who has “trapped” his way to the top of his class.

“Sit down, gentlemens!” he added immediately in an altered tone. “The Abbot comes this way!”

And the Grand Inquisitor, blushing and smiling at once, looked so like a pleasant country dame that from that moment I began to be better satisfied with our lodging in the monastery of San Juan de Brozas.

We heard a step hustle along the passage, the soft *brush—brush—shuffle—brush* of sandals worn by one who does not lift his feet. The door opened and a man entered, at the first sight of whose face my heart sank within me.

He was a tall man, gaunt and hollow-jawed. His eyes, deeply sunk in his head, shot out fire upon us. His very manner was terrifying, and I could well imagine him casting oiled faggots about the feet of poor wretches condemned to die for their religion. The Grand Inquisitor received the Abbot of San Juan with a gentle purring deference, and made room for him on the black wooden settle as a spaniel dog might give place to a mastiff.

He said something to the Grand Inquisitor in a low tone, and then turned to us.

“You are doubtless of the Religion—you have escaped from their cruel English plantations?” and the Abbot bent his brows upon us as he spoke.

“We have come from the Isle of the Winds,” I made

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answer. "We were carried thither by pirates from our native land!"

I heard the whisper of Eborra in my ear:

"If you wish to live and save those whom you love, swear to the man that you are of his religion! What matters it? Swear!"

"From the Isle of the Winds they come!" said the Grand Inquisitor, translating into Spanish for the benefit of the Abbot. And at the word I saw him turn up his eyes and cross himself.

"But you are of the Religion?" he persisted softly, and like one who insists on doing another a good turn. The Grand Inquisitor translated this time for our benefit.

"I was christened of the Church of England," said Will Bowman bluntly, after his fashion, "and though I can lay claim to little enough religion of any kind, that is the religion I shall live and die in."

That was well enough said of Will, but I was not to be set behind the door. No Yorkshireman alive was going to overcrow me with his Episcopianism—at best a poor thing to make a boast of.

"I am a Scot, and of the Scottish religion!" I said as grandly as I could.

"What is that? I never heard of it!" the speech of the Grand Inquisitor was more silvern than ever. Almost I might say he purred.

"I am a Presbyterian," I replied, a trifle nettled; "that is the religion of my country!"

"Say an opinion—call it an opinion, and I am with you!" he said, and continued to smile.

"And you?" his eye passed on to Eborra; "have you been christened in the Church of Inghilterra, or are you also of the Scots persuasion?"

To my surprise Eborra had shed his manner of a king's

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son, and now met the small shrewd grey eyes of the Grand Inquisitor with the broad grin which had attracted me first on the street of the privateers' village.

"I only poor ignorant Yellow Jack," he said, speaking thickly. "I know nothing. But learn—yes, holiness, Yellow Jack willing to learn everything!"

The Grand Inquisitor nodded pleasantly.

"Ah, that is better—much better!" he said. "Though your colour is that of Ham the accursed, such willingness does you more credit than your companions' fair-faced stubbornness. But you may influence them for good. The reverend Abbot wishes you to have free access to those of your race in charge of the chain gang. Perhaps they may furnish you with additional reasons for desiring instruction in our holy faith, and in this way your companions also may come to find the truth!"

"Give poor black boy your blessing, holiness!" said Eborra, kneeling with admirable suppleness.

The Grand Inquisitor extended a couple of fingers in a perfunctory manner, curved them a little as if he were going to scratch the head of a persistent cat, but continued to keep his eyes fixed steadfastly upon us.

I was very angry with Eborra for thus, as it were, deserting us in the face of the enemy; and as for Will Bowman, he glowered at our companion as if he could have slain him.

The Abbot of San Juan and the Inquisitor conferred together, the tall dark monk apparently persuading his little plump friend to something against his will.

"We had better look out for squalls," whispered Will Bowman. "I do not trust that monk with the black brows. The little one's our friend. I wonder what they are whispering together about?"

But I had been making up my mind to ask the

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Inquisitor to give us a lodging in some place where we could see and comfort my mother. I knew well that she would be in distraction away from us and alone with Anna, whom she had never greatly liked.

"Most reverend," I began, "we have escaped from a pirate island. My mother and her companion have undergone many hardships. I pray you to permit us a lodging near together. The health of my mother has long been weak——"

The Grand Inquisitor turned towards me. He smiled indulgently.

"Do not fear," he answered; "your mother's health will be cared for by the good sisters. I doubt not you will find her much improved when you see her again. It is not customary for the sexes to mix with each other in the religious houses of Saint John of Brozas and of our Gracious Lady the Holy Mary of Puerto Rico!"

And with a little quieting wave of his plump white hand he turned again to his consultation with the Abbot.

Eborra stood apart in seeming dejection, the broad smile gone from his face. He caught my eye and nodded confidentially. To this I did not reply, but averted my head, for I still was angry at his desertion of us.

Presently the Grand Inquisitor turned to us again, smiling in his most fatherly fashion.

"My friend has agreed to provide lodging for you," he said; "you must pardon the roughness of it. It shall only be temporary—I can promise you. That is, if I have any influence in this island—which I may say I think I have!"

I answered that I had no doubt of it. And that, whatever quarters he provided for us, they would prove pillows of down after the hard seats of the jolly-boat and

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the dangers of the pirate isle. It was good, I continued, to find one's self once again amongst Christians and brethren.

He struck a bell and immediately, as if they had been waiting for the signal, half a dozen lay brothers entered. We could see a score or so of the tall negro overseers collected in the shaded porch.

The Abbot spoke rapidly to the newcomers, nodding his head the while, and the Grand Inquisitor continued to smile subtly upon us.

"I bid you good-bye for the present," he said, "you, young sir, of the Scots persuasion, and you also" (he turned to Will), "who have had the so great honour of being christened in the Church of England. May a good conscience and the memory of your past privileges support you!"

The monk who had first found us upon the shore stood before us. He hooked a beckoning finger at me, and uttered two words in Latin.

"Venite, fratres!"

We followed him out into the courtyard among the whispering leaves and plashing fountains. Will and I walked side by side. But Eborra got no farther than the doorway. Here he found himself surrounded by the black men with whips in their hands. These all began to talk at once, laughing and slapping each other in noisy fraternity, Eborra grinning and jabbering away as fast as any.

Half a dozen of the brown monks accompanied us, talking low among themselves. These did not walk as if guarding prisoners, but rather like people accidentally going the same way. In this order we crossed the open square to the corner opposite the church. Then we descended a flight of steps and turned into a cool passage.

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We heard a sound as of dogs yelping, and began to smell the smell of kennels.

Our guide flung open a door and motioned us with a fling of his arm to enter. We did so, Will Bowman going first.

We found ourselves in a high narrow cell, the floor of earth trodden hard. Rings and wheels of iron were let into the wall on either side. Ropes and pulleys cobwebbed intricately aloft. The whitewashed walls were stained here and there with streaks and gouts of darkish brown, in their nature very suggestive. The windows were set high up, defended by thick bars of iron. Three tall-backed chairs stood on a raised platform at one end, the highest being in the middle and two a little retired in support. Above the centre chair were the insignia of the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

I saw now where we were. The Abbot had played us false. Still, if we were to appear before the Grand Inquisitor, I felt that he would deal kindly with us; for my liking had gone out to the little shy man with his soft voice and gentle ways. On the other hand, I knew we had no chance of mercy from the Abbot. I had mistrusted him at first sight. And Will Bowman thought as I did.

So we stood there, expectant of what should come next; and my mind flew to Anna and my mother even when my eyes were wandering among the maze of wheels and ropes overhead—the purport of which I understood well enough, though not the particular tortures for which they were designed.

What would become of my mother and Anna Mark? Would they also be shut up in some den of cruelty and pain? Or would the sisters be more merciful, seeing that they also were women? Before my mind had

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reached any conclusion I was recalled to myself by the entrance of half a dozen stalwart negroes. The first staggered in with a smith's brazier, and charcoal smouldering red upon it. A second followed with a pair of bellows upon a wooden stand. Then came two others carrying back-loads of clanking chains. They were all laughing and cracking jests at each other's expense. Two gigantic guards, with muskets over their shoulders and short swords by their sides, brought up the rear.

The negro with the bellows was evidently a sort of master among them. He set down his stand with an air of authority. Then he looked closely at us, bending his hams and laying his hands upon his knees in the attitude which we of Moreham call "hunkering." After studying Will and myself for a minute with bloodshot injected eyes—the eyes of a hound scenting the trail—he slapped his thighs suddenly, and cut a high caper with his feet. Then he cracked his heels together, and crowed like a cock. The monks had retired to the further end of the chamber, where they stood, leaning elbows on the tall chairs and talking quietly together.

"Ha, ha, ha!" broke out the huge black. "If this here doan' beat cock fightin'! English, by Gar! Me English too—Pompey Smith my name. Once me live in the Carolinas. English overseer score poor Pompey's back. Now Pompey have de whip and score Englishman's back. Ha, ha, ha!"

Then he took hold of Will Bowman rudely.

"Hold out your leg," he said. "I fit it with one pretty bracelet. So! Like him so much you never take him off—not even when you go bye-bye!"

He was stooping to take hold of Will's knee, when he received a direct left-handed blow between the eyes, and went down like a log. Presently, however, he got up,

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rubbing his forehead, upon which a shiny lump began to rise.

"Very well," he muttered (I need not follow his jargon, which is as tiresome to write as to read), "very well. Pompey Smith will remember. You shall have one most comfortable pair of bracelets. Nice short chains, so that you rest easy. Here, here! you Salazar, Pedro, Domingo!"

He called other three companions to him, and they seized Will, while the two guards pointed their guns point blank at me, lest I should attempt to escape. Then Pompey Smith with a sharp knife cut Will's hose round below the knees, and pulled off his buckled shoes, muttering, "These jus' 'bout Pompey's size. You better learn to go barefoot now, you English heretics. You go to hell plenty soon—and then you glad, because you get out of Pompey's gang."

Whereupon, summoning his assistants, he blew up the charcoal with the bellows, and in a short space he had riveted a pair of stout rings about Will's naked ankles. To these heavy chains were attached at back and front. A belt of iron was fastened in like manner about his waist, with smaller rings let in upon either side, to which again chains were fastened. Then it came my turn.

CHAPTER XL

THE LADY JUANITA

THE chain gang in which we presently found ourselves was made up chiefly of men from those northern provinces of Old Spain which lie nearest to France. From the man to whom I was chained I learned much. He was a Frenchman named Jean Carrel, born at Millau in the Cevennes. At the outbreak of the later religious wars, he had sold his vineyard near Carcassonne and crossed the mountains into Spain. Settling at Bilbao, he had become very successful in trade with England. All too successful indeed, for his growing wealth attracted the notice of the Inquisition, and he was seized and cast into the dungeons of the Holy Office. He spoke very excellent English, and, being a good and kindly man, though with no great profession of religion about him—at least from my Scots point of view—he told me many things which were very useful to me—as how to lie in chains most comfortably; how to pad the waist-belt and ankle-rings to prevent them from chafing; how to fasten up the connecting links in a festoon to keep the weight from trailing, with other matters of great assistance to me at this time. Apart from this his discourse was mostly of wine-growing and vintages, and by no means so much of religion as I had anticipated, which relieved me greatly.

I had hoped to have Will with me as my companion, but it was better for us both that at the first this was not

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so. For Will also chanced upon a mate who was able to instruct him on these points.

"Have you yet seen the Commandante?" said Jean Carrel, as we rested on our straw at noon that day. I told him "No," adding that I did not know there were any other authorities upon the island besides the Abbot and the Grand Inquisitor. The Frenchman whistled low.

"Alas," he said, "the Abbot, whom you fear, is our only friend here. The Grand Inquisitor is an evil beast and does what harm he can to poor men; but as for the Commandante——"

Words seemed to fail him to describe the peculiarities of this man, and even while he paused, we were again summoned to our feet by a sharp command in Spanish of which I knew not the purport. However, by watching carefully what my companion did and moving rapidly, I managed pretty well. Yet not so well but that as I passed a huge grinning black who stood at the door of the long wooden shed where we had our midday meals, he lifted his whip and smote me across the shoulders.

"How you dam English like that?" he cried; "you flog me in Jamaica—very much heap whip—how you like it yourself?"

And he followed along after us cursing me and all English at the top of his voice.

Jean Carrel whispered to me not to answer back or show that the man annoyed me, and then he would most likely in time tire of his amusement.

"If you speak back to him, he will send you to the flogging post, and if you survive, to the log gang in the stone quarries. That is worse than death."

"Great God most merciful!" cried I involuntarily, "is there yet worse torture than this?"

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"Yes, truly," he said, "this is but a preparation for the *auto-da-fé*—the burning alive by fire. We are all only waiting our turn. But the most unhappy men are those who have to drag a great log after them wherever they are called upon to go and whatever duty they perform!"

"You are all under sentence of death by fire!" I gasped.

He nodded, smiling at my ignorance.

"Each day of high festival there is a burning in the great square," he explained, "and if there be not enough of hapless Indians from the interior, or maroon negroes recaptured by the Commandante's forces, some are chosen from amongst us to afford sport to the faithful of Puerto Rico!"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"After all, it is best so," he said; "'tis a fiery gate to a fair heaven. But at least those that enter in are not long in passing through. They generally pour oil upon us!"

Then was my heart sick and sore indeed; not, I think, so much on account of myself as because I thought of my mother and Anna.

I asked the French Huguenot if they treated women no better. He shook his head.

"The Grand Inquisitor would burn them all and rub his hands to see the youngest and fairest of them writhe, if so be they would not receive the faith. Yet even that is better than that they should find favour in the eyes of the Commandante and his officers."

Then he told me that the chief of the Spanish troops on the island, Don Nicholas Silveda, was under the sole government of his wife, a foreigner ("I think of your nation," said my Frenchman) whom he had carried off

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from one of the English plantations, or, as some said, captured on an English ship. This woman, the Señora Juanita, was so jealous of every woman who came near the Commandante, that she would inevitably compass their destruction. "If the ladies" (he gave his national bow, courteous even in his fetters) "in whom you are interested are beautiful—well, there is the worst to fear." All the world knew what the Señora Juanita Silveda was. There was a story that she was of very low origin, and even——" But I need not repeat what Jean Carrel told me, which, after all, was probably no more than the gossip of the chain gang, or some ribaldry overheard from the black overseers.

All this time we had no news of Eborra. I feared that they had put him to death, or done him some injury for his defence of us. Judge of my surprise then, when, upon marching out to work in the patio, I found him busily employed superintending the digging operations, clad in a white suit like the other negro overseers, and, like them, wielding a whip.

Immediately upon seeing me, he came along and began to revile me, calling me pirate and assassin. Then he changed his speech and shouted opprobrious words in Spanish, so that I was dumbfounded, and indeed knew not what to say or do. Then, all at once, he laid his whip with apparent force across my back. Again and again he struck me, his eyes fairly starting out of his head with fury. Yet for all the energy of his anger, strangely enough the blows did me no hurt.

At sight of his excitement the blacks gathered together and encouraged him with shouts and laughter. At which he waxed very furious, and, coming closer to me, he struck me on the face with his hand, yet still without doing me any injury. Then he thrust his hook almost

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into my eyes, all the while crying out in Spanish, stamping his feet and spitting upon the ground, which last these black men do to express the height of their anger.

And it cut me to the heart to see him and to hearken. For I remembered his former kindnesses to Anna and all of us. But I said to myself that there is a great difference between a man who is a slave and who expects favours, and one in the position of power and authority over his former masters. Yet withal, I was full of heart-sickness and distress, for indeed I had thought infinitely better of Eborra after his goodness to us on the Isle of the Winds.

“But,” said I to myself, as he flourished about and threatened to tear the eyes out of my head with his hook, “none knoweth the heart of another till he be tested by prosperity, which is a test more difficult and trying than any depth of misery.”

Presently Eborra left me and betook him to Will Bowman, to whom he behaved in a like manner, but if possible yet more cruelly, declaring all the while that Will had been his “overseer” among the English, and that now he would show him how it tasted to be a slave.

But after all, Eborra, mayhap remembering some of our former kindnesses, gave each of us a hat shaped from a broad leaf and cast about our shoulders a short striped cloak, made like a blanket with a hole cut near one end of it—the which is called in this country a poncho, and is very suitable either for heat or cold. We were in the greater need of some such covering, for without it we should have gone entirely naked, exposed alike to the rigours of the sun and the biting of the buzzing gnats which abounded there, called muskittoes. For one of the negroes who conducted us to the gang had taken a fancy to our upper clothes, which, though frayed with

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our adventures, were of Umphray Spurway's own good cloth. He made us shift them, giving us no more than a lash of his whip over our naked shoulders in exchange.

"Dere, massas both," he said, for like many of his kindred the brute spoke a little broken English, a sort of *lingua franca* they all use in these parts, "dere, you dam skin lily-white now, soon grow black like poor Quassee!"

Moreover at this time, Eborra, for all his seeming cruelty and furious anger against us, did us one great kindness. He laid a spell upon us which made us sacred to his own peculiar Obeah. We became his "meat" as they expressed it—not to be abused or molested by any of the other overseers on pain of the curse of Eborra's devil, of which they were prodigiously afraid.

Every day we were marched out of our cells in the monastery square, through the booths of the free workmen to a road which was being made in the direction of the civil settlement. It had been recently commenced by the military governor, whose lady desired greatly to ride in her carriage (so Jean Carrel told me), even if it were no more than the mile or two between the town of Puerto Rico and the religious settlement of Saint John of Brozas. So a carriage, like that of a full blue-blooded grandee, had been brought all the way from Old Spain, the wheels being taken from the body and both lashed on the deck of the ship. The prisoners had helped to unload these on the mole at Puerto Rico. Mules of a noble white colour had come from the town of Vera Cruz, and now the chain gang was busy making the road upon which this equipage was to be exercised.

Every day, said Carrel, Donna Juanita Silveda rode out to observe what progress had been made, and if the work did not proceed fast enough to please her, she would

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strike the overseers with her riding-whip over the face and hands—a thing which at first the prisoners had been glad of, but changed their minds when they found as soon as she had gone that for every blow the negroes had received from her, they bestowed a dozen on those under their authority. So the visits of the Lady Juanita were no longer welcome, though in her way she was a not unkindly woman, and given to freaks of favour as strange and furious as her dislikes.

It chanced that one day we were awaked early and our lighter irons put upon us. This made us afraid that we were to go out to labour in the swamp, which in such a country of insects is no easy task even for Indians and negroes. It was almost certain death to white men, and there was scarcely a day that some one did not fall out of the ranks in spite of all the scourgings of the blacks. These, when they could no longer keep in place, were abandoned by the side of the road together with their chained companion, who must perforce remain with them till the smith should come and release him. So it happened not unfrequently that the quick and the dead were chained together for a long time—some even died of exhaustion and hunger beside their dead companions.

This morning, however, Eborra led his gang by the back of the nunnery, in order to bring up from the beach where we had first landed, stones and gravel for the more firm bottoming of the Señora Commandante's road.

Will and I were now chained together, a favour which like much else we owed to Eborra, who now began (but secretly) to show us some part of his former kindness. And this made me think that his severity had been only a blind. I was glad, indeed, to have Will beside me once more. For we could talk together in the hot night watches, and hearten each other up with hopes of rescue

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and escape. Not but what I was sorry enough to lose Jean Carrel, the Frenchman from the Cevennes, who was now chained to Will's sometime companion. But in trouble such as we were experiencing, there is no comfort like a comrade from the same countryside.

Eborra marched us all around the women's monastery, and you may be well assured that we kept our eyes about us to see if we could spy out any of our late companions, my mother, little Anna Mark, or even the black witch-wife, Eborra's dam.

As we went through a narrow lane, where we were marching some distance apart in order that the couples might jump the pools together, each making a little race before leaping, Eborra came up to us as if to give an order.

"At the corner of the enclosure demand of me leave to halt a little. Do not answer now, but wait."

And this thing we did upon a pretext. We were immediately allowed to quit the ranks, and at the angle of the wall where there was a broken place, rudely blockaded, as is the Spanish custom, with boards and paling stobs (for these people can never mend anything till it falls wholly to pieces), we saw a face that sent my heart forward with a great throb.

"Anna," I cried, and would have leaped toward her, but that Will, being more calm, restrained me with his hand.

It was indeed Anna Mark, her hair cut short, and dressed in a dark blue blouse and skirt of skin, rough-felted like Irish frieze.

Anna put her finger to her lip and glanced once or twice over her shoulder like one afraid of interruption. Then she looked at our chains in sorrowful surprise. For though she knew of it, yet to see the glistening links

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about our waists, and hear the woeful clanking noise at our ankles, made her sick at heart for us.

"How is it with you, Anna?—With Mistress Stansfield?—With my mother?"

These were the questions which poured from us.

"We are well, Philip," answered Anna, "but oh, to see you thus! What have they done to you—and why?"

"What, Anna, have they not fretted you on account of your religion?" I almost gasped in my eagerness.

"The Inquisition? What of my mother?"

"Your mother is very well," said Anna calmly. "She is, I think, practising the chants for vespers with Sister Agatha."

"How so?" I cried, too much astonished to think of safety; "have they put you to the question as to your religion?"

Anna nodded, and I think she would have smiled also, but at that moment our chains happening to give a dolorous clank, her face became suddenly pitiful again.

"Yes," she said, "Sister Agatha and the prioress were instant with us, but gently and with kindness."

"And what answered my mother?"

"Oh, she said that as a child she used often to go to Squire Lucy's chapel, which was Catholic—Master Will being with her. Then to the vicar of the parish with her father, which was not so different that she could see. But when she came to New Milns she was obligated to go to the Scots Kirk with Sir James. Yet for all that she liked Squire Lucy's best. So they were glad and kissed her, and dressed her in a black robe, with a white band about her forehead. They declare that they will make her a nun in a trice. Already she eats and sleeps by rule, and works all day at a brodered altar-cloth——"

"And is she not distressed for us?"

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"Of these she knows nothing," said Anna, pointing at our chains, "nor will I tell her. She thinks you have all accepted religion, and are as happy as she. She grieves for the separation. That is all."

"And you, Anna?"

"Why, as for me," answered the girl, "I told them that I knew no better religion than to try to do good to others, and pay to every man what you owed him. So they set me forthwith to learn a catechism and to bring in the firewood."

Then as I stood and looked at her the tears brimmed in my eyes for the greatness of the relief. It seemed not to matter any more about us who were men, now that I knew it was like to be well with Anna and my mother. Will had stood gazing at us without joining in the converse. For indeed of that I gave him little chance, being so eager to know all that had befallen, that no sooner had Anna answered one question than I had another ready for her.

So both of us being busied with Anna, we did not hear Eborra call to us, but stood there so intent upon the girl, talking and listening, that we never stirred an inch till a shadow fell across the wall to our right. We looked up quickly, and lo! round the corner of the nunnery wall there had come a lady in magnificent attire. She sat with an air of languid ease upon the finest white Maltese mule I have ever seen.

"What do you here?" she cried in Spanish with a curious twang to it. "To your places in the gang! And that youth within the nunnery wall—I will have him beaten soundly for idling his time! Sirrah—(here she called Eborra to her) is this the way you discharge your trust when you ought to be working at my road? Am I to trudge all day in the sun when I have a coach to ride

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in? I declare it will be all eaten into crumblings by white ants if you do not make haste. Draw your whip across these lazy fellows' backs or I will have a good three dozen applied to your own!"

Then, with infinite show of respect, Eborra approached and murmured something I could not hear. As the lady turned in the great richly caparisoned saddle, housed in the Spanish fashion, I got a fair view of her for the first time. And even as I looked my heart stood still within me.

I had seen the woman before. For a moment my memory refused to give up the secret of when and where. But as I stood with my mouth open devouring her with my eyes, it chanced that she turned her head towards me and threw up her well-rounded chin. Then the whole stood clear before me. I saw the low-sanded kitchen of the inn at New Milns, and my father standing there—tall, haughty, and defiant—with this woman a little behind him, bold yet afraid, handsome of feature, yet plainly of the vulgar, and brazening out her shame before us all with a kind of appealing defiance.

The wife of the Commandante of the Isle was Janet Mark, Little Anna's mother!

CHAPTER XLI

THE TAMING OF THE TIGER

STANDING thus stricken I flashed a look at those who stood about me, Anna and Will. I scanned their faces, and it was with the utmost relief that I perceived I was the only one of the company who knew the woman's secret. What indeed more impossible than that the child I had seen waving her little hand as her mother went down the road among the glittering bayonets in the grey of the morning, should recognise as the same this richly attired lady upon a Spanish Isle in the Carib Sea? And as for Will, he was no wiser. For though he was old enough at the time, he had not seen much of Janet Mark. And besides, as I have had occasion to point out more than once, Will Bowman never had my trick of picture memory, which all my life I was wont to cultivate by means of paling stobs and other trifles.

Meanwhile Eborra continued to speak rapidly to the Donna Juanita. I saw the colour flash up into her face, a warm rosy hue upon the whiteness of her skin. For that was her great beauty in a land of dusky women. When I had last seen her in her own country and much younger, she had been well nigh peony red, a rustic Blowsilind. But here, subdued by years and climate, the red and the white showed together on her face like York and Lancaster grafted on a single rose-stem. Her tendency to plumpness had increased greatly with ease and the custom of the country, but that among the

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Spaniards, and especially the military caste of them, is thought the greater beauty. Still, in any country Janet or Juanita (as she called herself) would have been a well-favoured woman, and, but for the demon that upon occasion looked out of her eyes, a good-natured one to boot.

"What, ye are English folk that have been among the pirates!" she said in excellent English, bringing her mule about that she might have a better look at us.

"My friend is English," I said hastily, lest Will should claim Moreham, "from a town called Skipton he comes, and I am a poor Scottish lad, trepanned from his own country and folk. Have pity on us, great lady! We suffer for our religion."

"I ken nothing about that," she answered, with a sudden chill; "but from what pairt of Scotland do ye come?"

(I noticed as she spoke that though she managed the English not ill, she said "ye" and "ken" and "pairt" just as they do in New Milns. And it was a mighty curious thing to hear the familiar accents of my native parish on the lips of a woman, the wife of a Spanish Commandante, in this far isle of the sea.)

"I come from a sea-faring town called Abercairn," I said, giving Will a warning glance that he was not to come any nearer to the truth. But Will, though wholly without diplomacy, had an admirable gift of silence, and simply looked at the white mule as if mentally summing up his points.

"Ah, from Abercairn!" she answered, with a quick look at me. "Did ever ye hear of a man by the name of Philip Stansfield?"

"Yes," said I, startled at the sound of my own name, but instantly taking her meaning, "that have I! Hear of Philip Stansfield—who that has lived in Scotland has

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not heard of him? Did he not slay the father that begat him? Was he not a murderer, a robber, an outlaw?"

"That is as may be," she said; "there were others deeper in and blacker of hue than poor Philip. But what of him? When was he execute?"

"He never was execute," I said; "he escaped on the very day, though many in Scotland still assert that he died on the widdy by the hangman's cord!"

"How ken ye that he escaped?" she said, a little breathlessly.

I did not reveal what excellent reasons I had to "ken" that thing, I merely told her the fact of the long and fruitless pursuit, of the attacks on many mansion houses, and how it had been more recently ascertained beyond a doubt that Philip Stansfield had departed furth of the realm of Scotland.

As I spoke the ruddy colour gradually left the face of the woman. The reins dropped from her fingers upon the neck of the white mule, and she clasped her hands as if praying in church.

"Save me—save me," she muttered. "If Philip find me here, I am a dead woman!"

Then after a little she commanded herself and asked another question.

"There was one Saul Mark in these parts, a seafaring man—he used often to land at your town, though that was not his country. I have heard him speak of it. Ken ye him?"

"What," I cried loud enough for Anna to catch every word—she had withdrawn somewhat from the paling, but still stood listening, a little removed from the woman's sight, "what, not a swarthy gipsy-like man with silver rings in his ears?"

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“The same—God’s truth, the same,” she cried, yet not gladly; “what of him? Tell me quickly. He is dead—tell me, he is surely dead!”

“He has oft been reported so,” I answered, “but ever turns up again, like a bad penny which even a beggar will not take as alms.”

“Where saw or heard you of him last?”

It was a difficult question, but I turned the corner of it, as I thought, adroitly enough.

“It comes to me that ere I left Abercain I was told that he had turned privateersman!”

“Alas! alas!” she muttered, “this is worse and worse. Every pirate and privateer in the world makes for the Spanish Main.”

“And this youth,” she turned about to where Anna had been standing, but seeing nothing of her she continued, “what does he in the nunnery? He looked somewhat over-comely to be foot page among so many granin’ women-folk!”

She laughed at her own conceit, and I at the Moreham expression she had at the close. So from this point we were the better agreed. And I escaped for that time from answering any more questions. I fear that I should have been forced to lie ere long. And that never was my desire—though, God forgive me, I have been driven to it time and again. But that I count not lying, and neither I believe does the Almighty, who knows that sometimes a bit whid is a work of necessity and mercy to poor hell-deserving humanity.

So the Lady Juanita Silveda rode away upon her white mule, her dainty feet encased in a pair of silver stirrups large as salt-boxes, while rings like barrel hoops jingled at the bridle-bit. And faith—she took the eye as a great lady and a comely! But I, alone of all on that

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island, knew her for the convict murderess Janet Mark, transported beyond seas for her crimes, and now in some strange fashion escaped from her punishment and established in all honour on this Spanish plantation. Well, even for Anna's sake I would be no tale bearer. Yet I was glad, for the knowledge might prove useful.

Then came Eborra to us hastily and took us away to the road without giving me time to speak a word of warning to Anna. But I trusted that my loud manner of speech and meaning gestures would have put her on her guard. Yet I could not think on the simplicity of my mother without a swarf of fear coming over me. Nevertheless I reflected that in the habit of a nun and with the changes made by the inevitable years, it was not likely that Janet Mark would know my mother now. Still, if any inquired, my mother would be sure to say point blank, "I am the wife of Philip Stansfield, of New Milns, in Scotland." For thus did my mother always, having no way about her but the straightforward one—a gait I have found ill-fitted enough to this present world, and which I look forward to as likely to prove anything but convenient in the next.

Eborra hastened us on our way to the gang, knowing that if the Lady Juanita were at San Juan de Brozas, it was not likely that Don Nicholas Silveda would be far in the rear. And so indeed it proved. For no sooner had we turned the corner of the nunnery orchard than at the further end of the gang we beheld a man upon a great plunging horse, riding this way and that among the workmen, swearing, striking indiscriminately at the prisoners and the negro overseers.

From the distance, only the gust of his loud mouthing oaths came to us, but presently we could hear the tapping of his stick on bare backs and iron belts.

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“Our turn next!” said Eborra; “take care not to answer a word!”

At that moment the man on horseback caught sight of us approaching. Instantly he set spurs to his beast and came shouting down the whole length of the gang to where we were beginning to work.

He called out something to Eborra, and made as if he would have smitten us. Now Spanish is an easy language to catch the drift of, to any one with some smatter of Latin. Added to which, that every Spaniard, instead of clipping his words like the English or broadening them out of recognition like the Scots, thinks it worth while to speak as beautifully as he can—which is called among them “having the true Castilian.” So, though I could yet speak but little, I understood a good deal and guessed more.

“Dogs and heretics!” he cried; “let me come at the dogs! I am a true Catholic. I am a Christian! May God strike me dead if I am not. May I be ” (here followed a silly blatter of oaths) “if I let one of the cursed crew escape!”

And what with the trampling of his horse’s hoofs and the scattering of the gravel and sand used for the embanking, I stood dazed and amazed right in his path. Anon he seemed about to ride us down. But swerving aside when quite near us, he brought his stick round with a sweep and took me directly under the ear with a ding that fairly drove me stupid. I swayed and would have fallen but that Will caught me on his arm and shielded my head from the blows of this most Christian Commander, Don Nicholas Silveda, taking them on his own shoulders without complaint.

After exhausting himself on us, he turned upon Eborra to strike him also. The black balanced himself

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a little on his hams like a fencer at the engage. He thrust out his hook in front of him and looked steadily at the assailant who towered above him.

Then I heard a sharp cry, and at first, being still muzzy with my clouted sounce, I thought it was the cry of Eborra. But looking again, I saw that it came from a wizened little creature like a monkey, of a brown countenance, who pricked hither and thither on a lively ass, much as a gadfly does about a group of cattle.

"Beware, beware, great captain," he cried; "let Iron-hand alone. He is very great Obeah. He will bewitch you if you so much as touch him!"

Instantly Don Nicholas checked his stroke, and with thumb thrust between his middle and fourth fingers, he made the sign for averting the evil eye.

"Avannt!" he cried, "I will not touch. Get away, I will have no witchcraft in my commanderie. The Grand Inquisitor shall know of this! Carrajo, I will beat the white heretics instead!"

And he would have fallen again upon us, as it were for mere pleasurable exercise, but at the very moment when he raised his stick Donna Juanita rode up upon her mule.

She did not waste a word upon him, but took hold of the weapon by the end which he had over his shoulder in the act of bringing it down upon our heads. She wrested the cudgel from him with a quick jerk, and, to the great amusement of all the chain gang, laid it soundly across the shoulders of the Commandante.

"These are my people—do not touch them, pig of Spain," she cried. "Have I not warned you before? Go! You are in disgrace. You are as a sow brought up in the Batuecas. You have no more manners than a bull of Estremadura!"

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And this, I learned, was her ordinary way with her husband. She was so eager to acquire the words which bite and scarify that she would go among the very trulls and morts of the soldiers' quarter that she might hear them talk. Then upon occasion she could lash Don Nicholas with words that stung worse than his own stick, so that he was cowed by the mere sight of her, and even in public would beg pitifully to be taken into favour again.

Yet withal there was a kind of curious restless fondness between these twain. For Donna Juanita would be furiously jealous of any woman to whom the poor man so much as passed a word of civility. And in such a case there were no bounds to her cruelty, nor any lengths that she would not go in order to satisfy her desire for vengeance. Don Nicholas also was reported jealous, and certainly whenever his wife took it into her head to visit the monastery or go among the soldiery, he would cause Peter Acla, the wizened little half-breed between Negro and Carib, to watch and bring him word concerning Donna Juanita's actions.

On this occasion, however, Don Nicholas took his chastigation meekly enough, and instead of raging everywhere like a bull, the red died out of his face, and he followed his wife submissively as she went hither and thither inspecting the new road, approving of this and condemning that with a judgment which was beyond appeal.

Presently she came to where Will and I were labouring side by side. She appeared to notice us with surprise.

"Let these men be freed instantly," she said, pointing to us; "bid the armourer remove their irons!"

Don Nicholas said something to her in a low tone

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which I could not catch, but its purport was clear enough in the reply of the Lady Juanita.

"I care not a sniff of tobacco for the Grand Inquisitor," she cried loudly. "I bid you to have the irons taken off these poor young men, who are my country-folk."

The Commandante made a little gesture with his hands, as if washing them of possible consequences. It was clear, however, that he was more in fear of his wife's angers than of all the powers, spiritual and ecclesiastical, of the Holy Office.

So the same great black brute who had riveted the irons upon us was called to remove them, which he did very unwillingly, the Lady Juanita standing over him all the time and stimulating his energies with the Commandante's cudgel as often as he paused for breath. On the whole I began to have a better opinion of even the ill-set and evil of my country, finding them of the first power and importance on this island of Saint John of Puerto Rico as well as on the Isle of the Winds.

In a little we were free, and followed the white mule and the black horse of the Silvedas through the chain gang, who, poor fellows! looked upon us with envious eyes. I saw Jean Carrel, and said a word on his behalf to my lady. But she only glanced at the man and said, "He is a French beast. I do not like Frenchmen. They eat frogs!"

So we passed on, and the Commandante followed Donna Juanita meekly on his charger, glancing at her now and then furtively as if to make out in what favour he was. It was amusing and yet piteous to watch him. His demeanour was in so great contrast to that of the raging, tearing tiger whom we had seen charging,

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cudgel in air, through the shrinking ranks of the chain gang.

Soon we struck the made road, which had been brought thus far to connect with the portion of the highway we had been helping to construct from the monastery of San Juan de Brozas to the commanderie of the Captain-General of the island.

Here we saw a huge carriage, gaily painted in red and gold, with coats of arms quartered all over the panels. A pair of outriders in gallant liveries bestrode the foremost of the six horses. At sight of it Donna Juanita Silveda clapped her hands, and made the mule break from its quiet amble into a kind of cantering pace, while it scattered its hoofs generously abroad to the danger of everything near.

It chanced that, being fleetest of foot of the company (in the absence of Anna), I was at the carriage almost as soon as the lady, and though, as may be understood, my pride revolted at holding the mule of Janet Mark, yet having no lack of the prudence of my nation, I made no difficulty, but held the mule as well as I could while the Lady Juanita dismounted. For which she thanked me with a bow that was never learnt among the clay biggings of Moreham.

She walked all round the carriage admiring the panels. She petted the horses. She laced and tied the shoe of the outrider. Anon wishing to see her equipage move, so that she might be able to imagine herself within its noble cavity, she ordered the men to go along the road at speed and to turn at the corner. There was, however, some difficulty in starting, owing to the hind wheels having sunk axle-deep in the light sand. Instantly Donna Juanita ordered everyone to take hold and help to move them, she herself catching at a spoke and heav-

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ing manfully, heedless of the half-concealed smiles of her attendants, or of the mud which stained the fine fabric of her dress.

"Lend a hand here, Nicholas," she cried imperiously to her Commandante.

"My lady," he made answer, blowing out his cheeks, "it consorteth not with the dignity of a hidalgo and soldier of the King of Spain, that he should labour with servants."

"Come thy ways," cried Juanita, "it consorteth worse with the dignity of the wife of an officer of the King of Spain that her coach should stick in the mud for the want of her husband's bestirring himself!"

And the poor dignitary had perforce to descend from his war-horse and aid with all his might. Whereupon, all suddenly, away went the coach. Juanita running a little after it and clapping her hands, laughing meantime with pleasure and excitement.

"Now, up with you, Nicholas! Give me your foot. There!" and with a hearty heave she had her husband again in the saddle, though there were twenty within reach who could have rendered that service for him. An extraordinary good-natured woman (so long as her toes were not trodden upon) was my Lady Juanita Silveda, sometime wife of Saul Mark, privateer and common pirate.

CHAPTER XLIII

PERILOUS FAVOUR

YET it was curious to note how in all her grandeur, and while speaking with carelessness and unprecision the new language she had learned, Janet Mark retained the manners of the off-hand, hoydenish, half-gypsy Scots wife. She thought nothing of shouting the broadest of jests down from her windows to the men-at-arms, and as for her husband, if in aught he failed in his duty, all the world knew of it by the morrow's morn. Yet in spite of this (or because of it) Don Nicholas loved her so greatly that he was never happy out of her sight, and was reputed to have forgiven her much more than is usually overlooked by men of his nation and profession.

Presently the coach came rumbling and swaying back, and Juanita insisted upon us getting in beside her, in order that we might try the luxury of the red velvet cushions, and admire the Venetian mirrors set into the front and sides, in which she was never tired of regarding the comeliness of her own buxom countenance and wide smiling mouth, with its fine double row of teeth, white as milk. Her husband made as if he would accompany her, calling for a servitor to hold his horse. But his wife shut the door upon the three of us, waving her hand out of the window and crying back to the Señor Commandante, "Bide where you are, Nicholas; once off your beast is enough in one day for a man of your figure!"

Juanita then plumped her down among the cushions

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of the back seat, rolling from side to side in feline and luxurious content, varied by leaning out of the window to make the outriders go faster. Will and I had meekly taken the front places opposite to her, as became our position. But Juanita would have none of that.

“Here, come and sit by me, one of you. Am I to be rattled about like a pea in a bladder, because you are mim-mouthed? You Englishman, you are the best-looking, come hither!”

And though that was in no ways true, yet I grudged not poor Will his honours. For he had perforce to sit beside her while Don Nicholas spurred his horse and through the window cast the blackest glances upon the perilous favours to which my comrade had been so suddenly advanced.

And so, all the way back to the town of Puerto Rico the carriage swayed and thundered, now swinging to one side, now lurching to the other. The stones and soil from the half-made road, desiccated by the heat of the tropics and blown to dust by the trade winds, flew in clouds past the windows from the spurning hoofs of the horses. Don Nicholas clapped his hat tighter on his head and set spurs to his beast to keep us in sight. His wife waved a hand out at the window as he dropped behind and challenged him to a race, calling him “Old Rum-puncheon,” “Dutch-haunches,” “Lard-barrel,” together with other yet choicer names, so that the postillions before and men servants behind had much ado to keep their seats between their mistress’s lusty japes and the instant perils of the road.

For me, I declare I wished myself well back in the chain gang! And as for Will, he confessed to me afterwards that, “She trod on my toes, looking at me the while as a dog does at a meaty bone! If this be favour

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with fine women folk, Lord send us back to poor Jean Carrel. I had rather suffer for my religion any day!"

Presently we crossed a creek, the horses splashing to the hocks, the water coming into the carriage, and Donna Juanita swearing like a grenadier, in clacking full-flavoured oaths she had learned from her father, who on a time had seen service with Grier of Lag. The beasts pulled us up the bank in a series of standing leaps, and at the top we found ourselves in a pleasant country, with trees in clumps and grass almost as green as in the policies my grandfather had been at such pains to lay out about the house of New Milns.

There were many trees too, some loaded with fruit, others gay with birds of red and green, that cawed and gabbled with hideous noise. The road improved greatly from this point, and the poor Captain of Spain had hard work to keep up with us, which, from his jealousy of his wife, he was determined to do.

Then all suddenly we came out upon the crest of a little hill, and, lo! there beneath us showed the town and mole of Puerto Rico. The castle is very strong, standing with its works defensive and military buildings on a point of land which juts into the sea. The town has several churches and many houses with little arbours and enclosed gardens, all within the wall of the city. But the larger gardens for produce are without and contain many good vegetables, with fruitage of orange trees, lemons, plantains, ground gourds, and an excellent fruit called coraçon, because it is the shape of a heart. Yet it must not be supposed that these gardens are fenced in or weeded as at home. The Spaniards, at least in their Indian colonies, have no inclination to be so particular and nice. So all lies open and is trampled over by cattle and the wild things of the woods. Yet it is astonishing

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to see how many herbs, roots, and vegetables come to perfection in spite of all, though few indeed in that luscious soil and forcing climate have the flavour of a Scottish winter apple or an English peach—indeed, I think none that ever I tasted.

At last we came to the castle, where, at the barrier, was a military guard. As the carriage entered, Donna Juanita saluted the officer at the gate like a comrade with an easy familiar wave of her white hand. Then scarcely were we drawn up before a large door studded with great nails than Don Nicholas galloped into the castle square, very red and angry, yet not daring openly to counter his wife in aught upon which she had set her mind.

Yet would he not permit us out of his sight, for, finding no groom at hand (we had returned unexpectedly), he let his beast go where it would, and ran hastily up the wooden steps after us to the upper hall, which was used by the Lady Juanita as her chamber of reception in ordinary. The horse, being accustomed to be petted, went straight to the low window of the kitchens opposite, and there the cook, a black man, fed him through the grill with piecrust and fragments of pastry.

As soon as I heard the Commandante mounting the stairs after us, I waited behind to let him pass. This he did, taking no notice of me, but brushing me aside he stamped furiously upwards after Will and the Lady Juanita. I longed for enough Spanish to tell him how poor Will had been suffering the torments of purgatory, yet perhaps as it turned out it was a fortunate thing that my tongue could form so few Spanish words.

For when we reached the lofty chamber, which was Miladi's hall and sitting-room in ordinary, Juanita ordered her husband back for a fan she had left behind in

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the carriage. The poor man paused, choked, hesitated, and went. As soon as he was fairly gone Donna Juanita turned her about and kissed Will soundly on the mouth.

"There," she said, "that is proper greeting between countryfolk in a far land. I have not had an honest Scots kiss in half a dozen years. These Spaniards are men of buckram and prunella!"

She would e'en have done the same grace to me, which thing I was dreading, having indeed no liking for the ceremony, but at that moment the hasty footsteps of her husband were heard returning. He had indeed made good speed in his message—better, methinks, than altogether pleased his wife. For she frowned portentously and threw the fan down on a couch pettishly, without even thanking him for his trouble. Yet, for all that she treated him after this fashion, Don Nicholas followed her everywhere with his eyes and fawned upon her like a whipped dog—which thing I judge not to be good for any woman, all of them being by nature the better for keeping in some manner of subjection.

Then Donna Juanita talked to us in English, or more often in Moreham Scots, of the more vulgar sort; while her husband, not being able to understand a syllable, sat and fidgeted, or stood by the window kicking his heels and tangling his spurs in the hangings, not daring to say a word. Save that I thought on the chain gang and the Inquisition, I could have found it in my heart to be sorry for him.

Donna Juanita listened to the relation of our escape with the greatest interest, till, asking where the others of our party were, she suddenly bade her husband go back incontinent to the monastery and fetch all who had come with us in the boat.

"I saw a well-looking young lad at the nunnery wall.

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It is not fair to the holy dames that he should stay there to play bob-cherry over so many watering mouths!"

The Commandante hesitated, as it were hanging in the wind for an excuse to stay.

"I shall send a messenger immediately," he said, "it is more fitting and the heat of the day is great."

"I bade you go and bring them, Nicholas!" said Juanita, continuing her talk with Will.

The Governor shuffled towards the door. His eyes, full of fury, were turned on Will and myself. I wished that Juanita had not showed herself quite so friendly. In a few moments, however, we heard the rattle of horses' feet, and looking through the curtains I beheld this most uxorious military governor with a single attendant speeding away in the direction of the monastery of Saint John of Brozas.

"I think," began Will, rising uneasily, "that I should go and meet——"

"Sit down," cried the lady, quoting a Spanish proverb, "The only folly I cannot forgive is ingratitude, the only sin stupidity. Time enough to greet your folk when they arrive!"

So perforce we had to sit down again and tell the lady many things to fill up the time. I spoke of my mother, but could not summon resolution to tell her of Anna. And indeed if anyone will take the trouble to think on all the circumstances, I judge that he will not greatly blame me. So that, be it well believed, it was with a tremulous heart that I waited the advent of my mother and little Anna Mark.

CHAPTER XLIII

JEZEBEL'S DAUGHTER

BEFORE her husband's return the lady had time to tell us all her adventures, now standing by Will's stool and playing with his hair, anon gazing out at the window. She spoke of Moreham. She queried concerning her New Milns. Yet all the while she continued to inform us in the common accent of the vulgar that she only knew these places from having visited at the house of a noble family in the neighbourhood.

"It was in her leddyship's time that I gaed maistly about Clay Pots," she said, with the careless hauteur born of high-breeding, "Aye, aye, fell fond o' me was her puir leddyship, an' tried hard to get up a match atween me an' her auldest son Hairry, that is noo my lord. But na—no for Leddy Johanna Mackinstry—that was mysel', my maiden name ye maun ken, I fairly scorned him. I juist couldna bear to look at him. And then a' thing gaed wrang when the Guid Cause gaed to the wa', an' at the last, me that was sae prood, was stown awa' frae my native land!"

Anon she would relapse into a number of Spanish proverbs, and the curious thing was that so soon as she ceased telling tales of her own invention and began to moralise after the manner of her adopted country, she spoke good enough English, relinquishing completely the common Scots manner of speech.

"But there—I have come to a country where the

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slaves are the only free men, where I must put up with fools and knaves and sing, 'Why left I my hame?' Yet God be thanked, I can make them serve me. 'If a dog barks at you, give him a bone; and death is the only sickness for which there is no remedy.' But what keeps my husband? He has had time to have been there and back a score of times. What is your name, young lad?"

"Philip!" I said, without adding any surname.

"Ah!" she meditated, "once I kenned a Philip—but he did not favour you—far otherwise indeed!" She looked me over a little disdainfully, and I blushed (I fear somewhat foolishly), knowing of whom she spoke. It was not vanity, God wot. For I know well I was never so tall or so well-favoured as my father. But so long as Anna thought differently I cared naught for the opinion of any other.

"Now, Philip, go and find my husband!" she said to me. "Tell him to make haste, for I am instant to see those who came from the pirate isle with you!"

I started up and was at the door in a moment, yet Will was before me.

But this the lady would in no wise permit. She thought more of Will's bodily presence than of mine, being older, I suppose—a thing that made me glad, and I resolved to vex Will afterwards by casting up to him the lady's preference.

"Bide, Englishman," she said, "let young Abercainr go!"

At which my comrade had perforce to return against his will, and I departed well content. But I was none so well pleased with the sight that met me outside of the town. For, mounted on mules and cantering ponies, I encountered a whole cavalcade. First came my mother on a steady pacing beast of a grey colour. She had on a

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kind of nun's dress with a white band across the forehead, in which I hated to see her. A brown rosary was about her neck, and she looked as if she had spent all her life within convent walls—this owing not so much to piety as to the delicate purity of her complexion, of which she always took the greatest care.

Next came the old witch woman, carried in a sort of rude litter by two stalwart negroes, while Eborra ran beside her, ready to render any assistance which might be necessary.

But the last pair caused me the greatest astonishment of all. For Anna rode boy-fashion on a fiery little steed with the Commandante beside her on his black charger. She was still dressed in the manner which some of the Spaniards have learned from the Indians; that is to say, in a youth's suit of dressed deerskin, fringed and beaded. A short tanned skirt of fine doeskin came a little below her knee. Cross-gartered hosen, little peaked Indian shoes, and a feathered cap completed an attire pretty indeed to look upon, but one which, appearing in Moreham Kirk on a Sabbath morn, would have raised a revolution in the parochin.

And all the time the Commandante was devouring Anna with his eyes, while as for the minx herself, as usual she was eking out her broken Spanish with her eyelashes.

“No puede, Señor?” she was saying, “no mas agua——?”

What it was that the Señor could not do, or why Anna wanted more water, I cannot tell. Most likely the whole was but an excuse to make play with her darkly roguish eyes. For it was about this time that Anna began to show a consciousness of her beauty wholly new, and I will admit that though I disliked it at the time, after-

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wards it was pleasing enough to recall her little successes, and how she served this one and that other, knowing all the time that her heart was altogether mine.

Presently they came within the enclosure of the castle. I helped my mother down from the saddle as from a castle wall, who, when she had disentangled herself, fell into my arms and wept over me. The first question she asked was whether Umphray Spurway had yet arrived. And when I told her "No"—"Ah, then," she murmured, "he is surely on his way!"

Over my mother's shoulder I could see the red-faced Commandante, who had dismounted in puffing haste, holding out his arms to catch Anna in the free island manner.

But of this Anna would have nothing, for, with a merry laugh, the little witch leaped nimbly down, resting only the tips of her fingers lightly on Don Nicholas's outstretched arm. Whereupon the gallant soldier of the most Catholic King bent him on one knee in the dust of the exercising yard and kissed the small brown hand which Anna permitted him to retain.

"Why, what harm? I thought I was doing the best for all of us!" said my lass afterwards, and gave not a fig for any doctrine or reproof of mine. But just the same it had been better if she had chosen another spot for her ill-set tricks than immediately beneath the window of Mistress Juanita Silveda.

Will Bowman told me of it afterwards.

"I was standing by the window sulky as a dog that you have kicked," said Master Will; "and I wished I had been one too. For the fat woman came and leaned upon me—*faugh*—and pawed my hair and breathed upon my neck, till I thought I would have burst, or, may be, clouted her on the ear. Had I not remembered that she

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was our only hope—indeed, but for your mother's sake—and Anna's, I would have let drive at the besom with my foot."

I said something here.

"Oh, that be hanged for a tale" (Will did not often swear). "I knew as soon as I clapped eyes on her that the trollop was no more of a lady than Tib our cat that rakes the roofs in the midnight! And as I say, if it had not been for—your mother, I would have knifed the trull and thrown her over the window to the dogs, like that other besom in the Bible—Jezebel, was that not her name? I heard Mess John read about her in the kirk once. And a rare tale it was too!"

"Then all suddenly I had case indeed," Will went on. "For it chanced that Jezebel looked out of the window over my shoulder, and there upon the plaza she saw King Ahab kneeling, if you please, on the hard mud to our Anna, who was decked out like a stripling from a play-acting booth, all fine with beads and tags and gauds. And she, well—looked down at him like the little vixen she is.

"Well—then I tell you the fat wench was in a rare taking. My lady thought no more of breathing down my neck. By the head of Noll, will a cat lick her paws when she can lick cream? Jezebel stamped her foot, and clenched her hands, looking as if she would have leaped down from the window sill upon the pair of them. She strode up and down like one of Lag's troopers in a covenanting house, and when at last the door opened, I expected her every moment to fly at Anna as she came in.

"And so she would too, only that the Don came first and the brunt of her angers fell on him. He quailed and stammered—as indeed you heard him. His own

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fine Castilian failed him in the hour of need as if it had been a foreign tongue.

“ ‘Foul toad, spawn of a mud bank,’ she cried, ‘you would betray me to my face and that with a silly ape-faced girl, the slave of a slave? By our lady, I will mar her. She shall no longer witch fools with her upward glances. I will pluck out her eyes—aye, pyke them as corbies do——’

“At this, thinking that she would do even as she said, I came between. In a moment she had a dagger drawn on me, the which she struck through my forearm. Then plucking it out again, she flew like a fury upon Anna, and if you, Philip, had not gotten between them, I trow she would have had it in her heart.”

Thus far Will. I may as well tell the rest in my own plain tale. I did step between the two, for Anna kept her ground gallantly as the wife of the Commandante rushed at her with dagger uplifted.

“*Hold, Janet Mark!*” I cried loudly, catching her uplifted arm, “*do not kill your own child.*”

She struggled wildly for a minute as I held her by the wrist.

“She is your own child, your little Anna Mark!” I repeated in a calmer tone.

And the second time the spoken words did not fail of their effect.

“Little Anna Mark!” she repeated after me, uncertainly, pausing between each word.

“Aye, Anna Mark indeed,” I continued; “the babe you bade farewell to on the steps of Moreham Kirk. I kenned you, Janet Mark, as soon as ever I clapped eyes on you!”

I expected every moment that she would turn on me and order us all to the gallows, being in fear lest her hus-

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band should discover her for the thing she was. But I had misjudged the woman. Sin like this woman's debases the heart, but it does not wholly kill natural affection.

She looked at Anna long and keenly. The stiletto or thin-bladed Albacete knife dropped from her hand. She ran forward, caught her daughter by the shoulders and eagerly perused her features.

"It canna be—it canna—it canna," she cried aloud in the old country speech. "This is no my wee lass—my bonny wee lass that I left sae far awa'!"

Anna stood mute, looking questioningly from one to the other of us.

"This is indeed little Anna Mark," said my mother, speaking for the first time, "but Philip doats. You are not her mother. Her mother was an evil woman, a murderess. She was transported for her crime. She was sold for a slave in the plantations of Carolina."

Now, thought I, we are done for indeed.

Recognising a hostile voice, Janet Mark turned on my mother.

"Who are you?" she said with a suddenly whitened face.

"I am Philip Stansfield's wife," answered my mother calmly, "and this is my son."

Janet Mark lifted her hands and hid her face in them.

"Philip Stansfield's wife," she murmured, and again—"Philip Stansfield's wife! God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then she turned to where her husband, Don Nicholas, was standing open-mouthed, not understanding a word of our discourse, but following with hungry curiosity every gesture and action.

She held out a hand to him.

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"Take me away!" she said, in Spanish.

She kept her eyes averted from Anna's pale face with its look of wondering innocency in which was yet no fear.

"My little Anna Mark!" she repeated wistfully, like one in a dream.

And as the door closed upon the Commandante and his wife, my mother sank down in a dead faint into Will Bowman's arms. Anna and I looked at each other, while Eborra's mother muttered incantation after incantation as if to appease an angry demon.

And truly all the demons of circumstance and misfortune seemed to dog our track, and for the first time in our wanderings I began to despair.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE CASTAWAYS

AND had I, with the second sight of Eborra's witch mother, been able to see that which was approaching the Isle of San Juan, I might well have said to myself that malignant demons were following our trail.

But as it was I could not discern a certain small boat far out to sea—a boat which seemed to drift here and there, yet which notwithstanding progressed nearer and ever nearer to our island.

There were two men in it, one of them lying at full length in the bottom with his face in the shadow of a thwart. He had his head turned away. His companion sat with one hand in his bosom. The other was laid occasionally on the tiller, from which it would drop off again in a moment. For the dull fiery glow from the slanting sun made the iron of the tiller-bar as hot as the ribs of a grate, falling at the same time upon the prostrate man and turning a pair of large silver earrings into hoops of burning copper.

The man at the tiller looked down as his companion turned his head and moaned. He slid his hand into a locker, and drew from it a case bottle and a small cluster of bananas. Then he held the bottle up to the light, turning it upside down to see how much liquid remained in it. The wide neck was scarcely filled.

The next moment Captain Philip Stansfield, late of the *Corramantee* and of the Isle of the Winds, was sup-

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porting the head of Saul Mark on his knee and pouring the last drops of rum down his throat. He did not reserve so much as one for himself.

To all intents the man he now stooped to succour had already died. The movements he made from time to time were no more than the spasms of imminent rigour. But the strong liquid penetrated to the springs of life. The heavy eyelids were slowly upraised, life looked out of the bloodshot eyeballs. The soul of the man awoke and showed a moment like an evil beast at the mouth of his lair. Saul Mark recognised the face that was bent over him, and the faint semblance of a grin twitched his lips downwards and to one side, showing his teeth. "Still a sea-mile to windward of hell, Philip!" he murmured, and closed his eyes with a singular gleam of triumph in them.

Captain Stansfield sighed and went on trying to force a piece of crumbled banana between the clenched teeth.

"Not yet," he murmured; "not yet. Death alone shall release me from my bond. I will pay the price, yes—to the uttermost farthing I will pay!"

And lifting his eyes, he saw black across the crimson arc of the sinking sun, very far away the sierra of the Isle of San Juan de Puerto Rico.

It was a week or two afterwards that the Lady Juanita Silveda, who had recovered from her brief indisposition, and now went out more than ever, ordered her carriage that she might take the air. With her went Anna, by reason of the sudden favour which had descended upon her. Indeed the Señora could not be parted from the girl, scarcely even for an hour. A bedroom had been hastily thrown into her suite of apartments in the Com-manderie, and the guardsmen and cloaked gaunt officers

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from Old Spain swore under their breaths that Donna Juanita had suddenly gone mad. For they said it was easy to see that Don Nicholas had fallen over head and ears ("and that last is a long fall," murmured Ramon Garcia, lieutenant of artillery) in love with the young English girl, whose eyes are like fire matches and whose skin like the rose-leaves of the huerta of Orihuela.

"Carramba, señores," quoth Don Ramon, curling his moustachios, "it is a shame that one shiny-pated old Commandante, with a fore-hold on him like the Port-of-Spain galleon, should monopolise the only two well-looking women in the plantation. Let them choose, sirs; let them choose. Trust a woman's eye for picking out a fine figure of a man!"

And with this conclusion Don Ramon swung the end of his cloak over his shoulder and about his mouth, according to the fashion of the Murcians, who, being condemned to grill six months of the year in hell-fire heat and to shiver the other six in an icy Gehenna, use their cloaks indifferently to moderate the rigours of either.

There was also much jealousy among the officers concerning Will and myself. And many there were, racked with fever and disappointment, fingered their daggers when they found themselves passed over in favour of a pair of heretics fresh from the chain gang, whose only merit was that they knew something about the duties to which they had been appointed.

For, ready to our hands (and somewhat readier to Will's than to mine) we found a weaving-shed where Indians and half-breeds, negro slaves and mulatto freedmen, starving colonists and men too weak for the chain gang, wrought side by side in the weaving of the striped serapes, the thick-wetted ponchos, the gauzy mosquito nets, and the comforting Mexican blankets.

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By virtue of the Commandante's favour Will was placed in charge of this, and, having appointed me for his lieutenant, he set about reorganising the whole after Umphray Spurway's model with his own quick decision.

Now in these new Castilian colonies there is no such thing as promotion by merit. Offices are given and taken with regard only to the amount of money or perquisite which is attachable to them. So that a sea captain will undertake to manage a gold mine or superintend a mint, take charge of a Government printing-press or start a sugar plantation with equal readiness, being noways concerned at any ignorance of his duties, but having only a single eye to any plunder which may stick to his fingers.

So that when Will dispossessed the incapable superintendent of the Puerto Rico cloth-weaving (a distinguished "sangrado" or island doctor), he naturally made a bitter enemy—or rather many. For every holder of a comfortable sinecure feared that one or other of these pushing, irrepressible English would supersede him and so divert plunder from donnish breech-pockets to those of the King of Spain.

But Eborra and his mother, by using their great influence among the blacks and Indian half-breeds, kept us informed of the plots to assassinate us as we passed through the forest. So that when the masked bravo sprang from the bushes, Albacete knife in hand, cloak wrapped about the other arm, we were ready for them with our swords bare, and hastened towards our assailants with loud cries. These incontinently turned tail and vanished, even on one occasion plunging into thickets of prickly-pear in their desperation.

A pistol-shot out of the wood was a more dangerous incident, and this became almost a feature of our pil-

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grimaces, till, consulting the Commandante, we obtained two men as escort; so with great bell-mouthed muskets loaded with slugs, we marched to and fro, the barrel of each piece laid affectionately over the shoulder of a Spanish soldier. In this manner we had peace and the cloth weaving prospered in our hands. Every Sunday we went to the Convent to see my mother as well as to do what offices of kindness we might to the poor fellows of the chain gang who had once been our comrades.

But I had begun to tell of Donna Juanita's excursion to take the air. Anna went with her, still wearing her fringed Indian hunting dress, which she found exceedingly convenient. And in beaded leggings, fringed skirt of tanned doeskin, quilled blouse pearly with silver buttons of Potosi, and close-fitting cap daintily feathered, who but Anna Mark "was a sight for sore eyes," as the saying is at Moreham? The soldiers at the fort watched for her, hollow-eyed with fever, and shook as they waited. The negroes worshipped her as though she had been a divinity. The Commandante walked beside her with his hat in his hand, and marvel of marvels, the Lady Juanita seemed more fond of her than of any other; so much so that it was almost impossible to find them separate by night or day.

I know not what tale the Lady Juanita had told Anna to account for her own transportation across the seas. I have never asked Anna from that day to this. Probably it was some invention of capture by pirates at sea, or kidnapping at home, such as would appear the more credible in that it had been our own fate. At all events Anna, willing though not rejoiced to be claimed as a daughter by this handsome and powerful lady, endured many caresses in the hope that thus one day she might be able to bring us all safe back to our native land.

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But this thought had to be severely concealed from the Lady Juanita, who, naturally enough, had no intention of revisiting Scotland.

"Two years, Anna," she would say, "and with our present economies we will be able to return to Old Spain. Nicholas has promised it. We shall see the glories of the King's court. I shall have my carriage repainted, and a new coat-of-arms blazoned. Nicholas will receive the order of the Golden Fleece. I have heard that the King himself has expressed a desire to see me. He likes fine women, so they say. You as my—my younger sister shall accompany me. We will marry you to a grandee of Spain. You shall have a winter house in Madrid, a summer villa on the mountains—at La Granja where the court goes. Nicholas is rich. We have no children. All he has shall be yours and mine. If anything should happen to him—well, who knows?—I may marry again. The Spanish rave about women of my complexion."

To all this Anna listened without remonstrance or making objection. For as she said to me afterwards, when I spoke to her about marriage with a grandee of Spain:

"No, I did not refuse. For, you know well, Spain is so far on the road home, and if we can get a passage thither and means to make Umphray acquainted with our case, we may yet see the Miln House again and hear the water lashing over the weir."

For as all may see, Anna had an old head on young shoulders and no idea of bartering the substance for the shadow. So long therefore as the grandee abode in the background, she was quite willing that her mother should talk as much as she pleased about marriage in the abstract. All the same I knew well that she had no idea

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of marrying any Spaniard, prince or beggar. About that I gave myself no concern whatsoever.

It was talking in this fashion that Anna and her mother rode forth towards the new road on which the gangs of half-naked men were still at work, their chains glinting and tinkling, while the cracking of the drivers' whips resounded from one end of the busy ant-heap to the other.

As the carriage drove up in the red glow of the afternoon the outriders were suddenly stopped by some obstruction on the highway. Voices cried confusedly, and whips smacked as the negro gang-masters strove to clear the road for the wife of the Commandante. Juanita looked out of the belly of the coach. She was in a good humour. She had the moment before married Anna to a prince of the blood and settled Don Nicholas under a marble monument as heavy as a church.

"Ah, a poor man fallen down! It is those accursed chains in the heat of the day. It is cruel indeed! But why people will not worship in the fashion *of* the country when they live *in* a country, I cannot understand. Stand out of the way there, fellow! Your hand, Anna. I will descend. I will descend! Bring the flask of strong spirit with you: it will revive the poor man. Take your black haunches out of a lady's way, will you?"

And so with loud humoursome authority she caused a way to be cleared. In a moment more Anna found herself looking at two men chained even as we had been—one was grey of head, the other black. One was elder and the other younger, but, save for a loin-cloth, both were gaunt and haggard and naked, even to the iron rings about their waists. The elder had the head of the younger on his knee at the moment when the two women came up. The younger opened his eyes.

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"Let me go," he murmured. "Why do you torment me? Let me go to my own place! You are a devil!"

And the elder answered him with a terrible grimace of hate: "I will never let you go. Death itself shall not release you. I will haunt you, follow you, live with you. You shall not die, but live on chained to the man you wronged. Philip Stansfield, my debt is not yet half paid!"

But the younger man had again fainted.

Then, even as Lot's wife above the gate of Sodom, slowly chilling from warm throbbing flesh and blood into a pillar of salt, so stilled and stiffened to breathing stone stood the Lady Juanita. At the first opening of the press she had gazed with growing horror on that which lay before her. The silver rings in the ears of the grey-headed man fascinated her. She could not pluck her eyes from them.

Her lips moved, or rather her jaw.

"What—what—what?" she gasped, in a kind of shrieking crescendo, as if her voice had spoken of itself without impulse of her will.

The man with the silver rings lifted his head. The surprise must have been even greater to him than to the woman. Yet he manifested no smallest wonder. Not a quiver passed over his brown, wrinkled countenance.

"Ah, jo Janet!" was all he said.

And though the woman stood there richly dressed, and the man before her was chained and well-nigh naked, the tones were those of a master who speaks to a slave. Then he seemed to recall himself to the case of his companion.

"A happy reunion!" he said, while the crowd of blacks and soldiers stood and gaped, partly at the foreign

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tongue and partly at the ladies. "Philip must not miss this—I will wake him!"

And stooping down he bit his companion's ear till it bled, as calmly as a priest who gives the sign of absolution.

A whip cracked and the lash hissed across the naked back of the man with the silver rings. It was Eborra, who stood before them quivering with anger.

"Let the Captain alone!" he cried. "Let him alone, Saul Mark."

Saul Mark raised his head and looked at Eborra.

"Yellow Jack!" he said calmly; "well, the wheel has turned once, it may turn again! I shall not forget."

CHAPTER XLV

SAUL MARK'S WHISPER

BUT the savage *reveille* had been successful. Philip Stansfield slowly rose to a sitting posture. His eyes, glazed and sunken, gazed about, at first vaguely, then with growing terror and comprehension. The Lady Juanita stood still, as if carved in marble, her hands gripping each other convulsively. Anna had passed an arm about her mother and now half supported the elder woman, looking like a tall young Dian in her hunting skirt of fringed and beaded skins.

Saul Mark watched his comrade's face with a certain grim and malicious pleasure, laughing a little as he did so.

"Janet—Janet Mark!" ejaculated the revived man, panting and gasping in his turn, even as the woman had done. And for the time could say no more, but sat up, gazing wildly as though he had seen a spectre.

"Journeys end in lovers' meeting!" said Saul Mark. The words seemed to burn and smoke like acid that is poured on copper. "Philip Stansfield and his paramour—kiss one another—embrace! Is all forgotten between you? Have ye found other mates? Fie, fie, thus to deny each other, who sinned together! Think of the blood shed for that cause! Consider——"

But he got no farther. For there in the midst stood forth the woman whom his presence had affected with

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such deadly terror. But now she was no longer the Lady Juanita Silveda. She was Janet Mark, the felon.

"Aye," she cried, "I bid you consider the blood shed—and who shed it? You, Saul Mark, drop by drop! The guilt may be mine and his. That I deny not. But, before God the Judge, the bloodshedding was yours first and last. By your suggestion and compelling I sinned and fell. I suffered for your crime. And he—he——"

She paused as if at a loss for words. Saul Mark laughed a low cackling laugh, nodding his head at the same time. He had crossed his legs under him and sat upon his feet, the chains that were upon him stretched to their utmost, looking like some hideous malignant idol of the Orient.

"What of him, aye? What of him?" he chuckled. "Are Philip Stansfield's sins mine too?"

"Aye, by God's great name, are they, Saul Mark!" she cried. "Yours—yours—yours!"

"You are generous with other people's sins, Janet," said Saul Mark; "pray keep one or two for yourself lest you grow lonesome in your old age!"

But she went on, her voice rising with every word till it rang out into a shriek, as she pointed with her finger at Saul Mark, the man who, in the eye of the law, was still her husband. Then Captain Stansfield raised his head and said, speaking very quietly, "Janet, the greater sin is ours alone. Let us endure the rest! Be silent as I have been!"

There was a sudden commotion on the other side of the widening circle. Most of the men had shrunk away, fearing they knew not what. Perhaps the foreign tongue used in anger had a strange sound to them.

And there through the gap could be seen the Abbot of San Juan de Brozas and the Grand Inquisitor sitting

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upon their mules, listening—the Abbot dark, stern, and inscrutable as always, the man of the Holy Office with his head inclined bird-like to catch every word.

“Your servant!” said the latter bowing. “My lady, are these more friends of yours? You are most fortunate in friends. Providence is indeed kind to you.”

He turned to Saul Mark.

“And you, my friend, are you also from Scotland and of the Scottish persuasion in religion?”

“I am indeed of Scotland,” said Saul, rising to his feet respectfully, and speaking in admirable Spanish so that all might understand; “but I am a humble follower of the true and ancient faith. I claim your protection, most reverend fathers. In this cause I have suffered much.”

“By what sign shall we know that you speak the truth, my son?” said the Grand Inquisitor cunningly.

“By two infallible proofs,” answered Saul with readiness; “by this that I shall show you in my hand, and by the word which I shall whisper in your ear.”

He slid down his hand and fumbled in the dirty breech-clout, which alone clad him sparsely about the loins. Then he held up a rosary, at the end of which swung a cross and a small golden reliquary.

“This I have carried with me ever since at Rome, at the tombs of the apostles, the Holy Father himself delivered to me this blessed relic of Saint James the Martyr!”

He gave the chain and box into the Abbot's hand, who received them with lowly reverence, crossing himself and commending himself to the saints, and especially to Saint James the blessed proto-martyr.

With trembling fingers he opened the box and glanced within. A folded letter lay on top, written upon a sheet

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of vellum fine as a butterfly's wing. The Grand Inquisitor almost snatched it in his eagerness.

"It is true—it is genuine," he cried; "this is the Holy Father's own hand and rubrication. I have seen it in the Holy Office at Madrid, commanding to greater diligence in the burning of heretics. Blessed—blessed—most blessed—the attestation in Latin, and all most complete! How came you by this great marvel?"

"Compared to your Lordships, I am a rude and unlearned man," said Saul with a low bow, "but it was my lot to receive it for a service I did the Holy Father. I have kept it till now. I have been in peril of great waters, in fear of my life among cruel pirates and deadly heretics. But now, most revered fathers, I give you this blessed reliquary that you may keep it in the church of your noble Abbey. I am not worthy to be the custodian of such a treasure. It is yours!"

The Abbot fairly blushed with pleasure.

"It will make us as celebrated as Compostella," he said; "we shall have pilgrimages from all the world to this my Abbey of Saint John of Brozas. We will rename it. Saint James shall it be—the Very Completely to be Venerated Santiago de Brozas!"

"So rare a relic would be wasted here," said the Grand Inquisitor, suavely, balancing the golden casket in his hand; "I will take it back to the King of Spain at Madrid, and for it he will make me Abbot of Poblet. I have always desired that post—their Priorato wine is so good. And for such a treasure even Poblet itself were not too much to bestow."

During this colloquy Anna had conveyed the Lady Juanita to her carriage, where now she sat, pale and inert, leaning back among the cushions like one who has gotten a deadly stroke. At this moment the Comman-

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dante rode up hastily. He had too long been out of sight of Juanita and Anna. So he came at a gallop, riding like one of the sons of Jehu.

He caught sight of the golden box and Saul Mark standing erect. The heads of the monks were very close together. In an instant he had grasped the situation, or at least part of it. Treasure had been found on one of the castaways who last had recruited the chain gang. The black ravens of the church of Brozas had swooped upon it. The Captain of Spain bore them no good will. The gold box was his—it contained jewels of price, most like. He would soon show these clerks who was master on the Island of Saint John of Puerto Rico—whether they or he, Nicholas Silveda, Commandante in the service of his Most Catholic Majesty Ferdinand, King of all the Spains.

“Give it here,” he cried; “all treasure trove is the prerogative of his Majesty King Ferdinand. I claim that which is found, whatever it may be, as his alone!”

“Excellency,” said the Inquisitor, with deference, “this is not found treasure. It is a gift to Holy Church, being a box containing the blessed parings of the great-toe nails of a martyr. Such even the King himself could not claim were he here in person!”

“The box is gold: I claim that!” cried the Commandante truculently.

“The box is the gift of the Holy Father, the successor of Peter,” said the priest. “It cannot be separated from the blessed relics it enshrines!”

“Deliver it, or I will take it by force!” cried the officer fiercely. For in his heart he hated and feared the rival authorities of the monastery. “Forward there, men! Seize them!”

The two priests put their hands to their sides swiftly,

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as a horseman draws a pistol from his holster. And the next moment a crucifix was in each right hand. They held these towards the Commandante and his soldiers, who shrank back as they would not have done from the muzzles of hostile guns.

"Dare to lay a hand on the priests of the Lord!" cried the Abbot, towering above them all on his white mule, "and we will wither the blasphemous fingers and deliver to eternal fire the souls of the desecrators! By these relics of the blessed martyr James we swear it!"

And so for a space they remained thus, daring the powers military to come on. The Commandante was speechless with wrath, but looking about he saw well enough that his men would not obey him nor yet seize these headstrong sons of the Church.

"I shall not forget this," he said, turning away.

"Do not!" returned the Inquisitor gently; "I pray that you will remember. Let it be a lesson to you, my son."

The churchmen were riding off together when Saul Mark, seeing himself forsaken, cried out to them: "Have pity, deliver me! They will wreak their vengeance on me. Take me with you, reverend fathers in God! Do not forsake me who did this thing for your sakes!"

But the Abbot and the Inquisitor seemed not to hear.

They had obtained all they cared about, and what mattered a naked man in the chain gang? The reliquary was a reliquary, authenticated by the Holy Father—or at least well enough documented for their purpose. But most like the man was a pirate, and got it at the sacking of some town of good Catholics, or, mayhap, from a plundered galleon laden with racks and thumbscrews and suchlike blessed machinery for the propagation of the

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faith. Let him abide. If he were a just man God would reward him. They would leave the matter to Him.

Then Saul Mark, seeing himself deserted and growing afraid, cried aloud, "The secret—the secret! I have a secret that will make you and your church richer than Kings of Castile and Aragon—wealthier than the mines of Potosi. I swear it. Deliver me and I will reveal the secret."

They turned about and consulted. Saul cried aloud again with even greater vehemence:

"Save me—deliver me! I swear I have the treasure secret—I and only I."

The Abbot and the Jesuit came slowly back. Saul stood eagerly waiting, his eyes flaming and the perspiration running down from his finger-tips. They bent their ears and he whispered long. The looks of unbelief with which they began gradually merged into a growing surprise. Then awe took its place, and lastly they cried out a simultaneous question: "Where is it? Tell us where?"

Then a cunning smirk passed over the face of Saul Mark. He was not a second time going to give something for nothing.

"*Only I can guide you thither!*" he said aloud.

Then in a few moments they bade cast him loose, and he begged that the companion whom he loved and could not be separated from night or day might go with him. This also was allowed. As the two passed the carriage of the Governor's lady, Saul Mark spoke a word, loud enough to be heard within.

"Do not fear," he said; "I will not shorten my pleasure by revealing your secret. Our loving service to you, jo Janet! Sleep sound to-night. Old friends are near!"

CHAPTER XLVI

THE "SAN ESTEBAN"

AND in this matter Saul Mark was as good as his word. Interrogated in private by the Grand Inquisitor as to how he came to know the Lady Juanita Silveda, he declared that Scotland was a small country, the shank-bone of the larger and richer England. His companion and he had heard of the dignified and distinguished family to which the Lady Juanita belonged, and of their sorrow at her disappearance while on a voyage to claim an estate in the western plantations.

But the Donna had seemed overcome. Well, so much was to be expected, hearing for the first time for years news of her family.

Thus Saul told his tale, and ever as he did so he turned to his companion as if to receive his corroboration, and it was somewhat weariedly and with a certain haughty pride that Captain Stansfield assented.

It was about this time that the rivalry which had long existed between the ecclesiastical settlement of San Juan de Brozas and the town and military post of Puerto Rico began to resolve itself into mutual courtesies and most punctilious amity. In order to appease the mind of the Commandante, still seething and working after storm in the matter of the reliquary, a suit of marvellously chased and damascened armour was sent him with the compliments of the Grand Inquisitor, and the hope that it might fit the brave and worthy representative of the

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King of the Spains in these islands. It had belonged to a knight whose body, when last seen, had been wrapped about in a well-fitting sheet of flame, provided for the purpose by the Holy Office of Mother Church. He had, therefore, no further use for armour, having, as a heretic, presumably gone where plate-mail can afford little protection.

But this, in his note of benefaction, the Grand Inquisitor did not mention. Details of that kind are not pertinent to the giving and receiving of a present between a dignified churchman and a loyal soldier of Holy Church *in partibus*. "Anon (so ran the accompanying missive) the Abbot would ride over on his mule with a train of monks or the Grand Inquisitor invite the pleasure of the company of Commandante Nicholas and his noble lady at his next festa in the monastery square. For now by great efforts the road was finished, so that the Donna Juanita could the more easily drive thither."

After a day or two Eborra brought us word that Saul Mark, and Captain Stansfield with him, were allowed their full liberty in the monastery of San Juan de Brozas. They occupied one room, and some of the negro guards had heard the man with the silver earrings laughing aloud during the night "like the bird which laughs in the woods where no man is!" (So they expressed it.) And they were afraid, for it sounded like a devil triumphing.

During the day Captain Stansfield for the most part walked silently up and down the quadrangle of the monastery or read books from the library. He spoke little and ate sparingly. A sentinel with a loaded musket continually followed him. Saul Mark, on the other hand, did not appear to be watched at all. He went everywhere about the settlement, and a table was kept

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for his use near the apartments of the Grand Inquisitor. Here, under the shade of a vine-clad arbour, with papers, ink-horns, and charts scattered about him, Saul sat drawing many days and often all day long.

As for Anna, I saw little of her during these days. But by means of Eborra and his witch mother we managed to exchange greetings every morning. She was well—so came the news. She had found my mother busy with her broidering among the kind sisters when last the Lady Juanita had driven over to the nunnery. The Donna was kinder to her than ever, but, for fear of Saul Mark, never allowed her out of her sight for a moment during the day. Even at night she would come to the door of her chamber half a dozen times—so that Anna was compelled to write to us on scraps of paper, and hide them under her pillow when she heard her mother coming.

I could well understand Janet Mark's reason for keeping her child in sight while so dangerous a man as Saul Mark was close at hand, and with allies so powerful as the Abbot and the Grand Inquisitor. But because of these precautions I could not very readily communicate with Anna, which was a grief to me.

Meanwhile Will and I laboured in our moist, hot weaving-shed, having matters pretty much our own way, so that we turned out enough cloth for the soldiers and also for the galleon, which was to stop here on its voyage to Port-of-Spain, bringing wool and taking webs of cloth, as well as forming the main channel of communication between our Commandante and his superiors.

But we soon became aware that great preparations were being made for some distant expedition. The *San Estèban*, the single ship of any size in the port, was being scraped and cleaned without and within. Will and I

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used to slip down at nights, when the moon was at full, to see her masts stand up tall and sharp against the sky. All was still and beautiful, the moon hardly shining so much as glowing with a whitish-green illumination up in the black sky. The fireflies glinted blue among the branches of the orange trees, and the glow-worms jetted fire at our feet. We watched the darting lamps alighting near their mates, the tiny fires first brightening, then dulling, last of all being obscured as the insects consummated their love affairs. All which interested us much.

On board the *San Estèban* we could hear a sound of hammering, and sometimes figures moved up the stays and about the rigging, all black as ebony save for a silver edging to each spar, mast, cord, and moving shadow. But, Lord! how the mosquitoes bit down by the fat mud-banks of the shore—great speckled fellows they were, and with the appetites of unfed tigers for good fresh Scottish blood.

On these nights it was hot with a kind of lukewarm heat, and Will and I would gladly have cast off our light clothes and plunged into the heaving waters. We refrained, however, owing to the presence of certain curious objects out in the bay. These were most like black bottles set aslope upon the sea, save that they passed and repassed swiftly and noiselessly across the shining wake of the moon, glistening like wet leather as they vanished into the shadow. These were the black fins of a school of sharks, and, as may well be believed, the sight put bathing for pleasure out of our heads.

It was upon our return from one of these rambles that we found Saul Mark waiting for us. He greeted us cordially enough, but with more than usual of the sneering manner which made me hate him so. He was

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seated very much at his ease in the little chamber at the end of the weaving-shed, where for ordinary we swung our hammocks, and kept what privacy was possible for us. It was a pleasant place save for the mosquitoes, and these we made shift to rid ourselves of by raising a great smoke or "smudge," as we called it, outside just beyond the verandah. This we started on one side or the other according as the wind blew. It was, therefore, through a fine cloud of this smoke that we discerned our unwelcome visitor, his black, beady eyes sparkling, and his large silver earrings glinting in the firelight which came in through the open door, bringing with it the rolling smoke. This last kept us all three coughing, and rendered more bizarre our interview with Anna's father.

"Your health, gentlemen," he said without moving, as we came in.

He had found and opened a large square case-bottle of Hollands, the gift of the Lady Juanita. He lifted a tankard and quaffed to us courteously, leaning back the while in our only sound chair and crossing one leg over the other very much at his ease.

At which Will Bowman only grunted, but I saluted the man courteously enough, both because he was Anna's father, and because (save in a matter of conscience) I have always tried to steer the course which most avoids the perils of life's pilgrimage by land and sea—not at all times, I admit, with entire success, but always with the best intent.

"You have been out to visit the *senoritas*—ah, youth, youth!" he cried, holding up his hands; "well, I'm the last man to blame you. I drink instead to your fair ladies' eyes."

"We have been down by the shore edge to admire the moonlight upon the water." So I answered him gravely.

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"Ah," he cried, with a note of added gusto in his voice, "so it was in my time—I also went to admire the moonlight upon the water!"

"Nevertheless, the thing is true, sir," said I, with a respectful assurance which I thought fitted to convince the most unbelieving.

"Ah, what have you in that pocket?" he said, pointing to the place in my blue working blouse where I carried Anna's letters in a flapped inside pouch, secured with a button and tag.

At this I was astonished, and, I fear, showed something of it.

Saul Mark nodded gently.

"Good lads—good lads," he said, "why should you be ashamed? We are all a family party here—husbands and wives, sons and daughters—somewhat mixed perhaps at present, but full of the possibilities of domestic bliss when once we settle down a little."

And his expression was that of a demon driver who cracks his whip of fire over a new and unstaled team.

Will and I had no words to answer him, and, after gloating over our silence for a moment, he went on.

"But now I need you, young sirs," he said; "you and I have work before us. I remember well your many excursions in the High Woods, when we were all, in a manner of speaking, so happy together on the Isle of the Winds—before the coming of Captain Keys' cruel pirates. You know the place of our adventure. I will reveal to you a secret. Under the blessing of the Almighty, we are fitting out an expedition to retake the island and find Morgan's treasure. It is not the first time Master Philip here has gone treasure-seeking. God give him better luck on this occasion! Your dusky friend comes with us as guide. I think you know what he will

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guide us to. Therefore make you ready. Let the weaving go for a week or two. The weavers will have a holiday and the webs will not rot. The Commandante also will leave a guard to keep all safe. So be ready to go on board the *San Estèban* at any time upon a summons!"

There was nothing for us but to obey, and I nodded my promise of obedience, while Will sulkily combed the back of his hand with a teasel.

"We will not fail you!" I answered.

"No, I shall see to it that you do not!" he answered, smiling.

And that was the one word of threatening he used.

CHAPTER XLVII

SAUL MARK EXPLAINS

IN addition to warning Will and myself, that very honest man, Saul Mark, made himself clear to all concerned on a certain hot evening a fortnight later. It was in the wide half-underground apartment set aside for Captain Stansfield and his companion in the Monastery of Saint John of Brozas. The Donna Juanita Silveda had just arrived to visit her compatriots. As was her wont on such occasions she had left Anna without in the harbour where were Saul Mark's papers and charts. The girl lifted one at random, and to her surprise found it a map of the Isle of the Winds, with the fathoming of all the anchorages and girdling reefs carefully marked. The position of the village was exactly indicated, but the work had evidently been interrupted, for the interior was a blank with only a few vague pencil markings upon it.

"Why have you brought me here again?" Anna heard her mother say as she entered. The reply was inaudible. Then in a few moments the woman's voice grew louder. "I will not!" she cried shrilly. "I tell you I will not—I would die sooner!"

Whereat the girl moved nearer to the door, thinking it no shame to listen when all our lives depended upon her vigilance. She had not to go outside, for even where she was, hidden among the crimson blossoms of the harbour, the voices came clearly enough to her ear.

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Then Anna distinguished that of Saul Mark, not raised like that of a commander, but only made more emphatic as if what he said admitted of no argument.

"It is not a question of your will, my Lady Juanita, but of your necessity," he said; "not of *may*, but of *must*. I speak, remember, to a man and a woman who are both at this moment not only sinners but convict murderers."

"And who planted the thought in our hearts? Who hounded us to that which was done?" It was her mother's voice, raised almost to a shriek, that Anna heard as she stood trembling among the heavy crimson-petaled creepers.

"Hush, Janet—it is useless," joined in the deep, quiet voice of Captain Stansfield. "This man is our task-master. Let him say the thing he will."

Saul Mark laughed a little scornfully.

"How wise is Sir Philip," he said, "how clearly he grasps the situation! It is a pity this prescience had not come somewhat earlier. It would have prevented many things—the Blue Room at New Milns for one thing, the limekiln of Provost Gregory Partan for another, a hundred tall ships scuttled and burned upon the high seas, plungings from slippery plank-ends, poor Jim Pembury and the lads of the *Corramantee*, some thousand boys dropping one by one in plantation cane-brakes—these and much more. And now Sir Philip chooses to be nice about a puling woman and a pair of youths as little distinguished from the others as the acorns of one tree!"

"Saul," said Janet Mark, as if trying to touch him, "one of them is his son and loves our daughter!"

If she spoke the word with the intent of exciting pity, it was ill-judged. He only shook his silver earrings and laughed a short cackling laugh.

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“Ah, ‘love,’ Janet—‘love’! It is a great word, and who knows its meaning if not you? You loved me! You told me so, you remember, once on a day. Sir Philip there once loved his father. He loved his wife, and swore it at the altar. His brother John loved him. Then, by a twist of the sand-glass, all is changed. You, my lady, loved Philip; you hated me. Philip hated his father, his wife, his child. Only I, poor Saul, do not change. I love you as much now as ever. And I will help you all to obtain that which your hearts desire!”

“Villain!” cried Janet, “you, not he, killed Philip Stansfield’s father. You egged him to speak the words which condemned him—even in the Blue Room of New Milns—it was your hand struck the blow!”

Looking past the centre of the arbour door, Anna could see Captain Stansfield lift his arm and lay his palm upon the woman’s wrist restrainingly. He would have spoken, but Saul went on:

“Hear me out—at least for old sake’s sake. We were speaking of love, were we not? I give the sand-glass another turn (he had been fingering one which stood on the table), and what do I see? Still this *love*. Now once more Philip loves his wife. You, my dear wife, love Don Nicholas and—your red-and-gold coach. My daughter loves this peeking Philip Stansfield the Second! Again I am the only faithful one. I alone love you all and make my dispositions without considering the turning of hour-glasses and the chameleon called Love Eternal!”

Then Philip Stansfield spoke.

“Say that which you have to say, Saul Mark. What do you wish us to do? By the sin I have sinned, by the blood I have shed (there is enough on my hands, whether

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that of a father or no), I am bound to this man as men bind their souls to the devil."

Saul Mark bowed a smiling acknowledgment of the comparison.

"You do me too great honour, Sir Philip; we made a bargain, you and I. For so much you risked so much. Did not you receive that which you bargained for? Am I a devil, then, because my side of the bargain holds?"

"Say plainly that which you desire, Saul Mark!" cried Captain Stansfield wearily, "I am in no mood to bandy words. As to your main contention, God knows I deny you not."

"My desire, say you," answered Saul with a curl of his lip; "well, to be plain, I am tired of all this. I will no longer be pirate, privateer, conquistador. I would go home to that which is mine. I would settle down at New Milns, live decently and cleanly, huzza for the King on Coronation Day, hob-nob with the parson on Sundays, squeeze Umphray Spurway, and in a word, Sir Philip, do all those things which the little matter of the Blue Room and several others prevent you from going home to do!"

"There are obstacles," said Captain Stansfield quietly; "the law—my brother John, who will yield nothing easily—my son——"

"Stop," said Saul, "we will only consider the last, if you please. As for the lawyer Jock (the name is your own), I hold him in the hollow of my hand, even as I hold his elder brother. His practice and character in Edinburgh are such that he dares not quarrel with me. But 'your son,' say you? Now I will not insult a man of sense by supposing that as a father you can have any affection for such a son. You were no stickler, Philip, when your own father, who gave you all, stood in your path. This boy is altogether too puny a gnat to strain

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upon now. He is in my way already, I tell you. He threatens to be more in my way. He has a faculty, common to cats and other sleek animals, of landing on his feet. And when I am settled at New Milns and lieutenant of the county, I want no long-lost prodigals coming knocking upon my front door. We must put that beyond doubt. Plainly, Philip Stansfield the Elder, you cannot go back to claim your heritage. *Philip the Younger shall not!* ”

“What—would you murder the innocent lad?” cried Janet Mark.

“Murder—murder!” cried Saul scornfully; “we three are far beyond calling any necessary rearrangement of dead and living by that name. The thing is at best but a convention. There are many ways by which killing is no murder—the Holy Inquisition for one. There is to be an *auto-da-fé* in a fortnight. If you, Sir Philip, have any suggestions on heresy for the reverend fathers of Saint John, they will, I doubt not, be pleased to consider them. There is much done in these islands which is impossible even in the capital of his Most Christian and Catholic Majesty of Spain. But I know of something better for him and for all of us. The lad is brave enough and shall die a brave man’s death. You have heard of Morgan’s treasure? Well, I have found it! I have promised it to the Convent and Don Nicholas as the price of my liberty. The good fathers are even now fitting out an expedition to recapture the Isle of the Winds, to recover the treasure, and to bring the whole back hither!”

“But Morgan’s treasure cannot be reached alive,” said Sir Philip; “how will you perform your promise?”

“I shall not perform it. I intend that Masters Philip Stansfield the Younger and Will Bowman shall reach it.

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They shall descend to the pitch lake! Whether they be permitted to return is another matter! ”

“ You shall not—you shall not,” cried Janet fiercely; “ of this your wickedness, my husband Don Nicholas shall be informed! ”

“ Silence! ” cried Saul Mark. “ Your husband, say you?—*I* am your husband—I and none other. You shall do as I bid you, Janet, or I will go to Don Nicholas and tell him the Lady Juanita is a sentenced murderess, the fly-blown paramour of a parricide, the gamester’s lure, the lime on the fowler’s twig! ”

“ Saul—Saul,” the woman cried, “ have pity! Have some pity! Who made me these? Was I not innocent before I knew you? ”

“ Innocent—innocent,” sneered Saul Mark, “ how innocent we all are! Go, tell Don Nicholas of your innocence after I have done with him! Where were your carriages then—your snowy mules, your petticoat governments—all gone up in the fiery reek of the next heretic-burning! ”

Janet Mark was silent. She knew her present husband’s Spanish nature and was afraid.

“ And Anna? ” she said weakly, as if she had abandoned her former contention.

“ Anna shall abide here with you—she need know nothing. By and by we shall marry her to a Don. And that poor cage-bird your lawful spouse, my good Philip, will make an excellent nun. We must keep her safe out of the Yorkshireman’s reach. I am an easy man, and she could do little harm even if she were free and had a swallow’s wings.”

He looked first at one and then at the other. They were both silent before him.

“ Now you see,” he said, rising from his seat, “ how

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moderate I am. The lad and his friend are all I demand, who might have asked the entire company. It is, indeed—how runs your scripture? (you were piously brought up, Philip!) ‘a work of necessity and mercy’ to remove two such youths from an evil world. And the boy is a great seeker of treasure. Well, he shall find it now!”

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When Saul Mark came out and looked about him, Anna his daughter was leaning over the brimming basin of the central fountain, laughing to herself and trying to catch goldfish with an angle.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE NEW POWDER MONKEY

It may be understood that Anna's news, which she carried that very night to Will and me in the weaving-shed, touched us very closely. For me, I did not feel nearly so much terror as in such melancholy circumstances I might have anticipated. And as for Will, I think he did not believe in the reality of the danger. He had that kind of English conceit that makes a man consider himself the master, not the slave, of circumstances.

"Courage, Philip," he said, "you and I are far from being dead yet. We are forewarned, which is to say forearmed. If they take us back to the Isle of the Winds, as they must if this be so—why, we shall escape and maintain ourselves in the High Woods till we get a passage home. Then Umphray Spurway will surely charter a ship, and with our fighting weavers as well as the crew, faith, it will go hard with us if we do not drive these Spaniards into the sea."

But somehow this seemed too remote a consummation to afford us any real comfort. But it was Will's way, and I did not contradict him. Then we sent for Eborra privately, to seek his counsel, who, when he heard that Saul Mark knew (or said he knew) of the hiding-place of Morgan's treasure, was very grave and silent for a while.

"I will go and consult my mother," he said, and so

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left us quickly. It was well-nigh an hour before he returned, looking much downcast and disconcerted.

"It is true," he said, "he knows. Some strong Obeah hath spoken to him; but not so strong as my mother's. We shall conquer yet, but it will be hard. And we must wait. If you go to seek the treasure Eborra will go also!"

"Perhaps they will not permit you," I said.

"Yes—yes—they will allow—" said Eborra. "I alone can keep the black men quiet. I alone know the woods. Perhaps Saul may kill me after, but first he will let me go."

I need not recount the anxious days, the hot and sleepless nights we spent, Will and I, while the *San Estèban* was being fitted up and the expedition for the Isle of the Winds prepared. We soon found that Don Nicholas also had been drawn into the venture. It had been suggested to him that the annexation of a new island to his master's dominions, and the destruction of a nest of pirates and buccaneers which had long been given to capturing Spanish treasure ships, would bring him vast credit in Old Spain. And, besides, was there not great treasure to be gained, not only from the possible hoards of Sir Henry Morgan, which Saul Mark had promised to disclose, but also from those more immediate and accessible ones amassed by Captain Keys and his men?

For long we could not understand what it was the expedition was kept waiting for. Everything seemed ready. The arms and powder were on board. All the *bucan* and dried food and grains were in hold. Cattle were in readiness to be slaughtered upon the even of embarkation. Yet still we waited. It was Anna as usual who brought us the word that we were delaying in order to allow the new levies to be landed out of the

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great galleon now on her way from Carthagera to Port-of-Spain.

One morning, however, as we looked out of the weaving-shed, we could see her masts and precipitous sides looming solemnly up the bay like some huge sea-monster, and the same evening the soldiers were ashore—a goodly band of stout fellows enough, with the country bloom yet red on their cheeks. For they came mostly from the northern provinces, which have from the earliest days reared the best fighting stock of Spain.

I know not what suspicion had suddenly taken possession of our captors, but on the same day that the ship for Port-of-Spain landed her first boat-load of soldiers, a detail of men came to the weaving-shed and put us both in irons again, or rather tethered us up like dogs at a kennel's mouth. For they fastened the same iron belts as before about our waists, and to the ring they welded a swivelled chain behind, by means of Pompey Smith and his travelling forge. But instead of sending us to the gang, they bored holes in the stout wood of the shed about the middle of the northern side, then thrust the chains through and made them fast to a great stake of wood driven into the ground on the outside. It would have been (in other circumstances) a most laughable predicament that we were in.

For we were thus able to do our work and even to meet and converse privately, having freedom of motion to the extent of our chains, though unable to reach the fastenings by which we were tethered.

The negro and half-breed women and lads who formed our working party laughed broadly at first, but since we had always been kind to them they grew sorry in their hearts to see us treated thus. Besides, we told them that if they did not obey us when we spoke, they would surely

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have black men set over them—overseers who would whip them as they whipped the chain gang. For such people of colour as are placed in authority over their own kind are much more severe than any white taskmasters. It is curious to hear them cracking their whips and crying, “ You damn nigger,” “ You black son of perdition,” when in point of colour there is not a shade to choose between slave and slave-driver.

In the evening arrived Saul Mark with great profession of sympathy to assure us that this was wholly the Commandante’s doing, but that it would not be for long. All was being done that could be done, and the good-will of the Abbot and the Grand Inquisitor were being used on our behalf.

“ But what can such young sparks expect? ” he said, with a cunning leer. “ I am advised that your favour has been altogether too high with the Lady Juanita. Ah, sly dogs—sly dogs! ”

But we held our peace, save to say that we had done nothing to deserve chains, and that we hoped that our bonds would soon be removed.

As of course we could not sleep in our hammocks in the inner room, some of the kinder of our work-folk brought us woven mats of palm-fibre, on which we slept not so ill, having pulled our waist-rings round as they showed us till the chain and its attachments were in front. So we made shift to get some sleep, lying wholly on our backs, which on any hard bed is the only position of comfort.

In this dolorous manner we lived at the weaving-house of Puerto Rico till the sailing of the Port-of-Spain galleon—that is, the better part of a week. The new soldiers, not yet accustomed to the routine of small colonies, came and jeered at us to pass the time. After a year or

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two in these climates they would be content enough to do nothing when they came off duty.

At last the day of the embarkation arrived. The *San Estèban* was loaded deep with stores and men. Not much provision was taken, for with a favourable wind the distance was no great matter. Yet there was ever a thought in my heart. I wondered how with this solitary ship loaded down with soldiers as she was, Saul and his Spaniards could hope to force the perilous passage of the reefs to the anchorage of the Isle of the Winds. But I might have been advised that Saul Mark would certainly have a plan clear in his head before setting out.

Not till we were taken on board were our chains removed. As soon as I got out of the weaving-shed I looked every way for Anna, but saw no sign of her. I felt somewhat sore-hearted thus to part without any word of farewell from her. But there was no help for it. We were speedily transported on board and found places as best we could behind the bulwarks on the main deck. The anchor came up with a rattle and a cheer, the sails filled, and we were off. I sat watching the long battlements of the Castle of Puerto Rico, but saw no sign of my sweetheart. Not a kerchief waved along the whole dull front of masonry, which made my heart yet sicker and sadder than ever before.

But I had not time to think heavy thoughts long. For the drums beat to quarters, and Don Nicholas and Saul Mark, with the Grand Inquisitor standing near them, appointed all of us our stations in case of any attack.

The guns were stripped, run out, and cleaned. Then came a bout of practice at the isolated sea rocks as we sailed past them. Presently there was a cry for the powder monkeys. The hatches were lifted and the first on deck with a bucket on her head was little Anna Mark,

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looking more like a winsome boy than ever in her high-kilted Indian dress, the leathern fringes blowing back in the light winds, and a flush of defiance on her lips as she gravely turned to salute her father and Don Nicholas!

CHAPTER XLIX

“FOR HER SAKE”

As usual Anna Mark (little no longer) had her own wilful way. Indeed, by appearing so late on the scene she had practically insured that. For the ship was too far on her course and the wind too favourable to return for such a cause. Furthermore, she alone could bring a smile—swift and grim indeed, but still a smile—to the close-set lips of Saul Mark. She alone touched something that was yet human about him.

“We must clip your wings, my lady,” he said, nodding his head at her with a certain appreciation. “We must not let you spoil this cruise as you spoilt some others. And if you are to be a powder monkey, I shall see that you do your work on board.”

Anna pulled a forelock and scraped a foot with all the gravity of the most ancient follower of the sea.

“You’ll find me do my duty, sar,” she said, hitching at her waist-belt with a certain impish daring that went well with her erect carriage and boyish costume.

Captain Stansfield stood apart as usual, taking no part in the arrangements for the short voyage of the *San Estèban*, but mostly watching Anna as she moved here and there, with what dark thoughts who can guess revolving behind his sunken and desperate eyes?

The Spanish ship was strongly manned, or rather, considering all the soldiers on board, overmanned. It was but a short expedition, and with the wind favouring

us as it did, we might have made the island any time during the second day. But Saul Mark evidently did not relish an attempt to force the passage of the reefs in the teeth of a hostile force, composed of such fierce outlaws as now held the island. So all day the *San Esteban* hung about on this tack and on that, manœuvring for the best position from which to run in upon the south of the island and attack the settlement from the back.

During this period Saul delivered his directions to the crew through their officers, and approved himself so excellent a seaman that these, for a time at least, laid aside their natural jealousy of a foreigner and aided him with a will to make his dispositions.

But what puzzled me most of all and turned my thoughts away from the ship was a tall column of smoke, or rather cream-coloured steam, very light and graceful, which rose high into the air from the place where the island showed plainly, lying pale blue and as it were waterlogged in the warm brine of the Carib Sea.

Will and I talked this appearance over. It did not seem like the smoke of a great conflagration, or I should have supposed that the pirates were burning the village. It was lighter, daintier, more ethereal. Sometimes it came in curious spurts and puffs as if the Isle of the Winds were smoking a peaceful pipe before retiring to rest. Anon it was only a soft gradual exhalation like steam wreathing up from a cauldron of boiling water. By and by Eborra came to us, but not even his mother's magic enabled him to put a name to the cause of the mysterious appearance.

“Maybe the High Woods are on fire,” he said; “yet it is the wrong season of the year for that. Or perhaps pirates burn their prizes. To-morrow we see!”

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This was all the assistance Eborra could give us.

It seems strange to me now that, knowing what we did of the intent of Saul Mark, we should yet be able to regard our return to the Isle of the Winds without any great apprehension. Yet so it was. Perhaps it was because we had been in so many terrible places, and in spite of all had won our way out. Or, more likely, because in a wild tropic spot like the pirate isle, we thought that there were many more chances of escape than in one settled and cultivated like Puerto Rico. We knew that, if once we had five minutes' start, with Eborra to help us, we might remain hidden for ever in the dense woods. And I for one had visions of an ideal existence in Eborra's tiny bay with Anna and Will and the half-breed. I had already planned how we were to carry off my mother from the nunnery, and I think also the Abbot to marry a certain couple, if necessary with a pistol held at his head.

So that when Will spoke of what we should do if we were compelled to descend into the loathsome crater in which Morgan's treasure was for ever broken on its wheel of pitch, I answered him indeed, but somehow not as though I believed that it would truly come to the deadly pinch with us.

Towards evening, as the sun sank to the sea, the creamy smoke-cloud over the highest part of the Isle of the Winds grew rosy, and we could see that it extended a very long way upwards, finally becoming combed out towards the top and blowing seaward over the High Woods in a long dragoon's plume of trailing lilac mist.

As the twilight deepened and the wind freshened the *San Estèban* drew inwards towards the side of the island farthest from the pirates' village. Here Saul Mark knew of an anchorage, safe from every wind except a furious

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tempest from the gulf, and of that at this time of year there was little probability.

We looked into the loom of the lofty and savage cliffs as we drew nearer with mingled awe and admiration, which were rendered greater by the strange pulsing glow, now red as blood, now yellow as wheat-straw, that beat irregularly behind them. The appearance was as if some vast conflagration had been dying out beyond the hills, and the beating light was accompanied at intervals by a low roaring sound like heavy surf on a windless night. Anon a recurring rumble would shake in our ears, causing a throbbing whirl of the brain like that which precedes fever. At this the glow reddened momentarily and then died down, till again through the stillness only that long continuous surf would boom on unseen beaches.

We soon found that Saul Mark did not mean to take any risks of our escaping. Even when the boats were being got out, and while the first soldiers were embarking, our irons were re-affixed and our wrists put into heavy fetters. Anna went to her father and besought him to trust us not to escape, but he only shook his head.

“I cannot afford that,” he said, speaking without heat; “these young men are over clever to take any chances with.”

Then Will and I resolved that if the irons were kept on us, we would not march at all through the woods. They might carry us if they chose, that was all. Presently Eborra came and crouched with us behind the bulwarks. We spoke in low tones of the hiding-place of Morgan’s treasure and its deadly guardians. Eborra tried hard to teach us the low hissing whisper, which (as we had seen) charmed the snakes into harmlessness. We made

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various attempts at it, but without enough success to give us any real confidence. I judged that most likely the charm lay in the person using it more than in the actual sound. Nevertheless we did our best, and, as Eborra said, succeeded not that ill.

Thus we four—Will, Eborra, Anna, and I—were waiting our turn to disembark and listening to the dipping of the oars, when suddenly a shadow fell between us and a bank of stars on the side of the ship farthest from the Isle of the Winds. I saw even in the darkness of the night and upon the unilluminated ship's deck that it was Captain Stansfield who stood there. He waited silently, leaning on the bulwarks and watching the phosphorescence of the sea-deeps wave like a banner under our keel. But as soon as the deck was quiet about us, and all possible listeners removed, he spoke to us in low firm tones.

"Go forward—do not fear," he said; "no harm shall come to any of you on this island. I promise it."

Then he was silent a while, as if waiting to take advantage of a favourable moment in another's feeling.

"Philip," he said, "I speak to you. You are my son. It is true I have been no worthy father. Yet now before I go into the presence of the Judge, I would shake your hand. Mine is stained deeply enough, God knows; but, though guilty, the blood of a father for which men hold me in loathing, is not upon it. Take my hand and tell me that you forgive!"

"I forgive you freely for all the ill you have done *me*," I answered; "the evil you have brought on my mother I cannot forgive."

He sighed a little and then said: "Philip, you ought to have been named James. You are your grandfather's son, not mine. But yet—tell your mother that if she

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had loved me at first it might have been otherwise. Yet at the last my heart dwelt upon her. Yes, in the blackness of despair and death I loved her. At least tell her that the thing which I shall do, I do for her sake!”

I reached out my hand to Captain Stansfield. I always thought of him as that—not as my father. His grasp came to me through the darkness. He held my hand in his for a long moment, and then moved silently away. I could see him, by the light of the red glow reflected above the trees, stand by the foremast watching the men going over the side into the boats.

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We made our way slowly through the forest, Saul Mark leading with chart and compass. The lantern carried beside him was the only one allowed to the expedition. The rest of us came stumbling after as best we could. Four men made shift to carry the Grand Inquisitor in a kind of litter. Will and I were each chained to a veteran of the wars.

It was indeed well that we had landed far down the desert side of the isle, for the large company, most of them quite unaccustomed to the High Woods, made a noise which might have waked the dead.

Huge blackberry briars tore our thin clothes as we entered what appeared a very cave of darkness. Men stumbled on ahead of us, falling over prostrate trunks with the rattle of accoutrement, and recovering themselves with strange oaths. Tall trees moaned overhead. Lianas creaked like cordage between us and the roof of leaves. Invisible things threw themselves from strand to swinging strand. From beneath our feet came the rustle and hiss of disturbed snakes, and as often as a bough scratched my face I could have cried out, for I

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felt in every thorn-prickle the dreadful lashing stroke of the Fer-de-lance.

And ever in front of us pulsed clearer and broader that strange ruddy light, against which the leaders of our advance stood out black. Sometimes during a halt I could see Saul Mark, his chart spread on a fallen tree. Eborra was at his elbow, the lantern in his hand, and the iron hook pointing out something on the map.

Then in a moment we would be called forward again. Often I could not hear the whispered order, but each of our guards simultaneously gave a tug at the chain by which they held us in leash. And once, as Will did not move fast enough, the brute in charge of him promptly set the point of a knife to his back and pricked him sharply with it. I could see Will turn white with anger. In a moment he would have been at the fellow's throat, but I caught him by the arm.

"Wait," I said; "if we pay at all, let us pay our debts at one settlement."

The fellow with the knife flourished it over his head, and for pure deviltry would have pricked Will again, but at that moment the red glow shone out like sheet-lightning, and against it I saw momentarily something dart black and straight as an arrow. The next moment Will's guard uttered a terrible scream, and dropping his arms he pressed his palms to his face, with shriek after shriek of pain and terror.

Saul Mark looked back quickly.

"Gag that man!" he commanded; "he will bring every pirate in the isle upon us!"

In a moment Eborra was beside us. He carried the lantern. I saw him stoop to the man on the ground and turn his head with his iron hook. Will and I were standing quite close—Will indeed still chained to the soldier.

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By the light of Eborra's lantern we could see two tiny punctures behind the ear where the great vein of the neck is.

“The man is dead,” said Eborra, standing up; “Fer-de-lance has stricken him.”

And so it proved, for while flourishing the knife over his head to threaten Will, he must have touched the branch on which the snake lay.

Then a great fear fell on all the company. It began to be whispered what the man was doing when the serpent struck him.

“Why do you not sing, Eborra?” I whispered to the half-caste, “he may strike again.”

“No,” he said in a similar tone, “this is no living snake, Philip. Fer-de-lance does not strike at night. This is a *jombi* that enters the body of a snake to strike down his enemy. Do not be afraid. My mother is working great Obeah for you now. The *jombis* are all about us. They will protect you!”

And indeed it is true that we did feel all about us the oppression of invisible presences. Yet the sensation was no pleasurable one, but rather as if someone unseen were about to put his hand on your shoulder in the dark.

At this moment Saul Mark ordered Will to be chained to another armed guard. They cast the dead man loose. (He died while we stood looking, strangely contorted and of a visage that blackened under our very eyes.)

“Forward!” commanded Saul: “lead on, Yellow Jack, if you know the way. There is not a moment to waste. It will soon be morning.”

Then Eborra summoned to the front all the blacks and Indian labourers and serfs to bring their machetes and cut a way through the tangle. He himself held aloft the lantern and directed them. It was a strange sight,

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the red throbbing glow going and coming like a furnace that dies out and is continually refreshed. The dense blackness of the canopy of leaves overhead enveloped us. The waste of hanging vegetable cordage seemed trying to entangle us—lianas and lialines like huge hawsers and cables, others again thin as trout-lines. As the light of the lantern flashed across these, other plants were seen clinging to them as the mistletoe does to an apple-tree in the orchard at New Milns—in rosettes of gorgeous bloom, glaring red and white and orange even in that sombre place, some tied like favours on the lianas, others drooping unexpectedly from above like a spider letting himself down out of the midst of his web.

In this place the machetes made fierce play. Hack and slash and cut they went. Green fruits, strange and leathern apples, horny plums like musket-balls, insects like walking twigs, vast spiders with legs that burnt as they touched the bare skin, hairy caterpillars as big as bean-pods, rained down upon our heads. But still Eborra hastened the work, and we made our way towards the source of the light.

We rose gradually as we proceeded, passing the great swamp by a firmer path than that by which we had formerly crossed from the direction of the pirate village. A soft steamy mist, impregnated with a sulphurous smell, swelled and billowed about us.

Suddenly out of the dense shadows and creeping vapours of the High Woods we emerged upon a wonderful scene. Before us rose a great black hill, in shape most like the Law of North Berwick viewed from the shoulder of Moorfoot. But it was not the hollow tower we had seen. The dense undergrowth, the matted carpet of moss and wild hemp, the quaking hill—all had vanished. There was a hot and deadly taint in the air

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which kept us gasping. Our mouths became dry as the dead bones of the desert with the thin sandy grit that showered upon us and seemed to pervade everything, crunching between our teeth as we walked.

That which fronted us now was no castellated wall of black basalt. The dry sand had grown hot underfoot, and crumbling inclines of loose grey ash sloped steeply up to a hilltop which snorted and roared above us. Subterraneous rumblings made our hearts quiver within, as the red light we had seen sprang upwards and anon sank low. We were now near enough to see that this was not fire, but, as we say in Scotland, the “skarrow” or reflection of the fiery heart of the mountain thrown upwards on the great hooded column of smoke, shaped like a palm-tree or long-stalked mushroom that towered above all into the sky.

The dawn was now coming fast, and the column of smoke or steam changed its aspect every moment, now growing pink like a roseleaf, and anon flashing into whiteness as, rising out of the sea, the sun smote its upper part long before it reached us, where we stood among the black and blasted growths on the edge of the forest.

Eborra came close to us as we remained gazing upwards. It was the first time I had ever seen him really smile, for I do not count the grimacing of Yellow Jack. He pointed towards the mountain we could see breaking through the jungle before us.

“Harry Morgan has come himself for his treasure,” he said, “and has brought his master along with him. They both very glad to see their friend Saul!”

And, indeed, there was something eminently devilish in the smoking, coughing, spitting, roaring monster before us. I looked across to where Saul Mark stood,

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shading his eyes with his hands and watching the raging fire mountain where he had expected the quiet lake of pitch. It must have been a terrible disappointment to him. Yet of that he showed nothing.

“Forward!” he cried, pointing to the cone of ashes. And first of all the expedition he started up the windward side of the fiery mountain.

“Bring these lads along!” he cried to our guards, thinking of us even in that moment of disillusionment.

And so, bent double by the slope of the mountain and slipping among the loose clinkers of the lava streams, we mounted as best we could after him. Anna came lightfoot with us, often running a little before, and giving us a hand when otherwise the weight of our chains would have brought us to a standstill.

It was very near now—the fiery furnace in which Saul Mark designed that we should be cast. But there was in my heart none of the confidence of the three youths in the Book of Daniel—and that in spite of Eborra and Captain Stansfield.

Suddenly, as we mounted the cone, the black ashes changed to crystals of sulphur, yellow and brown, glistening like the stones which come from off the mountain called Cairngorm. Wide black ruts and holes, their sides feathered in brightest red and yellow, led down into the heart of the mount. These continually belched up burning steam and choking odours which blew in our faces like the breath of demons. If this was Obeah, as Eborra said, I wished that Obeah had been somewhat sweeter of throat. For the hot reek, blasting in my face, turned me sick and faint, and I swayed upon Will as I stood.

At last we came out upon the unstable summit. It had a lip, narrow, crumbling, and dangerous. There

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was, however, a wind here which blew most of the smoke away from us, so that the place was more tolerable than upon the breathless slopes beneath.

I looked over into the crater, setting my breast to the edge and holding Anna's hand as I did so. My guard would on no account approach nearer, but stood at the limit of the chain, sinking his halbert deep in the ash for a holding-post—and, indeed, I did not blame him, for the sights and sounds were heartshaking enough.

This is what I saw.

Immediately beneath me, and so abruptly that one could almost toss a stone to the bottom, was a lake (as it seemed), no longer of pitch sluggishly turning over in its sleep, but of fire bubbling merrily like a great broth pot. From this jets of steam hissed furiously upwards. Blocks of glowing rock spat out viciously, and when a loose stone or boulder fell from the precipices above into the cauldron, it was instantly dispersed, often exploding with a loud report like a bombshell, and casting the fragments high over our heads as we lay and watched. I have listened to pleasanter music than the sound of these black jags of rock as they snored past us, booming upwards like drone beetles in the summer gloaming.

Saul Mark stood near us. I could see him biting his lip and clenching his hands as he looked down. But even then, and in this place, he seemed to know no fear. Don Nicholas and one or two of the bolder spirits among the Spaniards had mounted after us, and we stood all close together on the highest part of the crater lip. In every direction the deadly vapours prevented closer access, and though the stones fell about us like summer rain, they were mostly small and did us no great hurt.

“What of Morgan's treasure now?” said my father,

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looking at Saul Mark with a kind of grim pleasure on his dark face in a lull of the noise.

The man's features were instantly contorted with an access of devilish fury.

"Morgan's treasure is gone," he cried, "but I will tell you there is another—over yonder—he pointed in the direction of the pirate village—a greater doubtless than Morgan's."

"We might have gone thither at once, then," answered Captain Stansfield; "it was a waste of time to bring us here with so great ceremony, all to see this devil's cauldron boil."

I could plainly discern that for some reason of his own my father was trying to irritate Saul Mark. And if such were his intent, it is certain that he succeeded. Saul turned upon him with a fierce action of the hand.

"I will show you, Philip Stansfield, whether I have brought you here only to see a pot boil. Cast off these chains!" he cried to the soldiers. "Now couple the lads together. They are traitors and villains. Their black slave bind also with them. He has deceived us. Fling them all three into the fire!"

The soldiers, obeying a sign from the Commandante, who stood lowering darkly behind Saul, began to do as they were bidden. And then, in spite of comfortings and promises, I thought that our hour was truly come. Anna sprang towards her father, running so carelessly along the perilous edge and among the rotten sulphur crusts, that my very bowels were turned to water to look at her. She caught Saul Mark by the hand and besought him to spare us. He threw the girl off with such violence that she had almost fallen, and would, I think, have done so if the Commandante had not reached a hand and caught her by the fringes of her hunting dress.

“Let alone!” he cried to Saul; “you take too much upon you! Do as you will with the young heretics, but do not touch the maid.”

Saul moved his hand with a commanding gesture, without answering the Commandante. The soldiers set us close together, coupled at waist and wrist, on a ledge overlooking the fiery furnace beneath. There was a moment’s pause as they brought Eborra from below.

“Now,” cried Saul, as with a leer of triumph he turned to Captain Stansfield, “I have kept my word. My work is nearly completed. On the day you wronged Saul Mark he promised that he would drag you down to the pit, and blot out your name and seed from the earth. Behold the fire heated seven times for your first-born! See how it leaps up! It is a quick and easy death. Hold back the girl there! Make ready! Fling them in!”

I could feel the soldiers at my arms and back breathing deeply and retracting their muscles a little, as men do who are about to make a mighty effort. I, too, firmed mine, that I might not cry out with sheer terror. I saw Will Bowman holding back, with his feet stiffened against the black and crumbling cauldron lip.

Suddenly Philip Stansfield, who had been standing quietly a little beyond Saul Mark, sprang at him and caught his enemy in his arms.

The man with the earrings struggled fiercely, but the grasp was too strong. Captain Stansfield pushed him steadily forward till they two stood among the last crumbling embers that slid away from them into the burning pit.

“Tell Mary that it is for her sake!” cried my father, and leaped out into the abyss, carrying Saul Mark with him. A gust of fiery heat shot upward. A jet of dense blue vapour shut them from sight ere they reached the

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bottom. Its poisonous fumes struck us full in the face and sent us reeling, as if stricken by a mighty, invisible hand. Fire seemed to rise out of the crater, out of every rift and crevice and blowhole. The mountain heaved. At this the soldiers turned and fled, leaving the three of us on the crest. Anna came to us bareheaded and pale of face even in that furnace glare. Then we stood a moment with clasped hands and gazed after the two men whose deeds had changed and marred so many lives. But we saw them no more. Only the pale green flames leaped up and danced merrily beneath in the pit of hell.

Silently we turned away and went down again with no gladness in our hearts. For we knew not yet what should befall us. At the foot Eborra spoke for the first time. "Be bold," he said, "they will be much afraid. I told the black men that a judgment would befall, and that all should so perish who dared to threaten a hair of your heads! It has come to pass!"

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AND so, indeed, it proved. We found all the Spaniards anxious for a speedy retreat. The blacks whom Eborra had terrified were clamorous for it, and the others shared their alarm. But the Commandante, being a brave and determined man, stood out alone. He refused to return to Puerto Rico without something to show for his endeavours.

“What!” he said, “because two foreign prisoners cast themselves into hell before their time, shall we that are soldiers of the King of Spain slink off like whipped curs, and leave thousands of gold pieces within a few miles of us? We are on the Isle of the Winds. The pirates are few in number—most of them probably away on their expeditions. We will take them unawares, root out the murderous nest, capture their treasure, and obtain great praise and reward from King Ferdinand. But first we shall indeed go back to the shore, in order that we may rest and find out by means of scouts the way to the village and the dispositions of the robbers there.”

“Let one of your men go with me,” said Eborra, “to witness that I do not lie. We will spy out the buccancers and bring you back word within twelve hours!”

The Commandante conferred apart with the Grand Inquisitor, and presently Eborra was sent off with one companion in whom they had confidence, an expert

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woodman who had formerly served with Captain Keys on another island.

So upon the edge of the sea, at a place where there is a pleasant sandy bay, we were set down to wait. Our chains were taken off, and one soldier, more kind than the rest, gave us salve and lint for the chafed skin of our ankles and where the weight of the belt dragged heaviest above our thigh bones. Anna made broth for all in a cauldron, and in this fairly good ease we waited Eborra's return. It was curious how greatly all rejoiced that Saul Mark was dead, which may appear strange when one of us was a daughter, and a maid of tender heart like Anna. But after so many trials and so much evil both threatened and accomplished by this man, there were no ties of affection possible between them. And when Anna brought us broth in the iron lid of the pot, before beginning to eat we all clasped hands and said, "God be thanked!"

But in this we thought chiefly of Saul Mark. For of my father, who had striven to do one noble deed at the last to wipe away so much evil, I at least could not think save with gratitude. And I wondered greatly what my mother would say when we told her.

Now, though both the Commandante and the Grand Inquisitor had been sorely disappointed in the matter of Morgan's treasure, yet I could gather, as they stood consulting together, that they were not altogether ill-satisfied with the turn of affairs. For though at the first Saul Mark had been taken up by the priests and afterwards supported by Don Nicholas, I judge that neither of them was unwilling to be rid of so dangerous a man and one who threatened to supplant them in authority.

We lay all this day on the outer sea edge among green bushes and under the shade of wild cotton trees. Imme-

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diately beneath us the land crabs were rising mysteriously from the midst of the white coral sand, trundling hither and thither, and as it were shaking themselves free of the dust of their holes. We could hear their great claws clicking together like tailors' scissors as they scuttled in and out of their warrens. The smaller were green in colour, but the big warty seniors were as grey and bloodthirsty of aspect as if they had been formed out of the rock itself.

Beneath these again appeared the fringe of white surf, the deep indigo-blue reefs sunk in the azure of the Carib Sea, with the sun beginning to recline comfortably in the west.

Anna went to and fro among us, dealing out what provender had been landed from the ship. Several of the negro overseers accompanied her, and at the back against a wall of rock a fire was lighted, the smoke of which dispersed itself among the tangled masses of creeper hanging down from the cliff.

And so quickly do men in these outlandish places reconcile themselves to death and change, that, if it had not been Will and I who ourselves had been delivered from death, I do not think that any of those who waited the going down of the sun so much as thought of the two men who, an hour ago, had gone whirling into that fiery Gehenna locked in each other's arms.

The Commandante and the Grand Inquisitor talked together, summoning first this one and then that to assist them by his counsel. About an hour before sunset, Eborra returned with his companion. They brought the news that very few pirates were to be seen, and that the village appeared to be deserted. I judged, however, that Eborra, who knew every foot of the jungle, had not permitted the man to see more than he wished. There

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were three ships in the harbour, but each of them appeared to be manned only by a sparse watch.

Will and I were exceedingly anxious to get speech with Eborra after his return, but the latter kept carefully away from us, busying himself about the fire under the cliff where Anna was cooking. The Grand Inquisitor watched him with his small twinkling eyes, and the negro never so much as looked in our direction. Presently, however, Anna came over to us with some strips of boiled beef laid upon platters of palm leaf, very fresh and tender.

“Eborra bids us keep well in the rear,” she said, smiling and pointing to the strips of beef as if asking how we liked them; “then at the first sound of shot we are to drop off and lie close among the underbush till he joins us!”

Will and I each sent a question at her, but she only laughed merrily and nodded her head as she tripped back again to the fire, making believe all the way that we were greedy fellows who were not content with what we had gotten, but wished for double rations.

Half an hour after sundown it was dark, and we started up the side of a creek full of rich fat mud. From this the miasma rose palpably, the mosquitoes hummed and pinged in cloud-banks like those about Newfoundland. “*Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-eeek!*” was what they said. And when they came to “*eeek*,” pronounced with a little upward twirl of their really remarkable voices, in went the poisoned stiletto, and we smote the part with cheerful alacrity without waiting for further information. Most of us also offered comments in our several vernaculars, but these I need not write down here.

As we marched I desired to assist Anna as best I might, but she preferred to persevere in her own way, only tak-

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ing my hand when the ditch or swamp happened to be too wide for her to leap. Thus the whole expedition followed Eborra through a kind of park-like savannah country. He was making a long detour in order to avoid the volcano, which we could still see flickering beyond the High Woods. But the light was not clear and wide, like autumnal sheet lightning, as it had been the night before. The bluish swamp-fog which came up from the creeks spread sideways till it was as much as we could do to see the men in front of us. It would have been easy enough to have "dropped off" here and none the wiser. But the prospect of hiding all night on rotting leaves in an atmosphere of pure fever was not inviting enough. We resolved to wait, according to the negro's instructions, till the guns began to go.

The fireflies continually jetted across us, flying almost into our eyes, and vanishing again into the pall of mist.

"I wonder if they know their way or where they are going?" I whispered. For I was ever prone to notice trifles at the wrong times, when my thoughts ought to have been upon more serious matters.

"*Who* are going *where*?" growled Will, whose legs were paining him where one or two of the cactus prickles had broken off in the flesh.

"The fireflies!" said I. But Will did not show any interest. He was sore and miserable and felt the beginnings of a tendency to shiver. He muttered a wish with regard to the fireflies which consorted ill with his recent confession of Church of England baptism.

"I should be content to know where *we* are going!" he added sharply.

About an hour after this the word was passed along the ranks that now we must be ready to fall on at any moment. Eborra had reported that the pirate village

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was near. We could hear a restless cock crowing every few minutes, and more than once there came a whiff as of hot wood ashes and the unchilled hearths of man.

On the back of this ensued so long a pause that it seemed to have no end. I could hear in the stillness the toads croaking, and nearer the whisper of the Commandante arranging his men for the assault. Anna and I waited hand in hand. Will Bowman opened his mouth and inclined his ear into the darkness. A gun went off below us, sharp as a signal, then the clear notes of a bugle. The Commandante shouted a loud order in Spanish. There was a lively rush through the underwood. *Crack! crack! crack!* The guns were going now with a vengeance.

"Into the brush with you—quick!" said Eborra, hurrying us away to the left. We stumbled over gourds, pricked ourselves on the bush called "Figs-of-the-Moor," stumbled against fruit trees which sent heavy globes down forthwith to break our heads. Then after a breathing run of a quarter of an hour, having left the main attack of the Spaniards well away to the right, we crouched on some open ground at the foot of a clump of tall trees. The rattle of musketry beneath us grew almost continuous. We could hear the Spaniards going bravely at it, their high, screaming shout rising and falling. But what was that which answered? Not the wild pirate yell! It was—no! It could not be. Yet surely it was a cheer—the mouth-filling, heart-stirring cry which men of English speech make all over the world when they fight for the mastery.

The moon had risen and the mist grown luminous about us. Suddenly Anna clutched me, and I felt swift fear run coursingly through her.

"What is that, Philip—oh! what are these?"

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She pointed above our heads. The moon shone a little clearer. We had stopped under a great row of tall forest trees which stretched their branches stiffly at right angles. There were so many that the line disappeared into the mists on either hand. Many of the limbs shone gaunt and white like the arms of skeletons fantastically disposed. But that was not the terror which caused Anna to grasp me by the arm.

From every naked bough a dead man dangled, stiff and still, some of them slowly and solemnly revolving as the links twisted and untwisted.

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We sat as if turned to stone, frozen, cold. There was one almost directly over our heads. Looking up I could see that he was hung in chains, the scarce dimmed metal glinting in the cold grey of the mist-choked moon.

Then we heard Eborra laugh. In such a place it was a sound to chill the blood.

“For Heaven’s sake speak, Eborra, who are these?” I hardly knew my own voice as I spoke.

Light as a blown leaf Eborra danced a quickstep and clapped his hands.

“Pirates—buccaneers! Captain Keys and his men!” he cried. “The English sailors have hanged them. There are three ships of war in the bay! Now the Spaniards find much rare treasure! Harken! There they go. Eborra warned the English captain. Pimiento—red pepper in the pod—the Spaniards will get tonight! No more chains—no more slave gang! The English have taken the Isle of the Winds. We just wait here a little till the botheration is past. Then we will go down. Ho, Captain Keys and your bloody pirates, now you swing by the neck! Hitch further along, captain!

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Leave plenty of room for Don Nicholas and the little black priest!"

And again Eborra danced his weird dance in the feeble light of the moon, as the crackling of firearms thinned out and the hurrahs grew louder beneath us.

"Now we go down, but Eborra first, to make all safe!" The negro left us down by the eastern shore where the liberty men used to take their walks. It was almost daybreak, though as yet there was no sign of the day, for the false dawn had long passed and the moon was eclipsed by the high trees we had left behind us.

Over the reef passages we could see the mist beginning to break and whirl away in rolling cloudlets, as peat reek does from a chimney on a windy day. The wings of sea-mews glanced white as they swept low over us, screaming shrilly for the coming of the morning. We waited long. Will was muttering to himself, I could not tell what. Anna and I kept very close together.

Suddenly we heard Eborra's whistle. I answered him. The negro bounded joyously towards us. Soon we could discern him plainly, a lithe black figure against the white coral sand. Behind him strode a tall, stout man, cloaked and hatted from head to foot. Something familiar struck me, something which sent my heart into my mouth. But Anna suddenly dropped my hand and sprang forward. With a sharp breaking cry she flung herself into the tall man's arms. I saw his grey beard droop upon the girl's head.

The mist whirled away. There was a rapid flush of dawn in the east.

"Umphray Spurway!" cried Will Bowman and I with one voice.

And Umphray Spurway it was.

CHAPTER LI

THE WITCH'S DEATH SONG

“TELL the dog that if so much as a hair of her head be touched I will twist his wizened Popish neck. Higher than Haman will I hang him, and all his slave-driving, torturing crew! Tell him that!”

It is not necessary to say that the words were those of Umphray Spurway.

The mighty Yorkshireman was never careful of his speech. As soon as he heard where my mother was, he proceeded to the store-room in which the prisoners were confined with a strong guard of sailors and marines over them. Don Nicholas was there also, wounded in the shoulder, but bearing his misfortunes with the philosophy of a man and the courage of a Spanish gentleman.

But the interpreter was not needed. The little Inquisitor answered for himself in his quaint and creaky English.

“Sir,” he said, “the lady is better than well. All day she sings with Sister Agatha. Every night she prays. Every morning she confesses.”

“I shall soon stop all that nonsense. Poor Mary, that she should be turned into a Papist at the last! I will have her on board the ship in half an hour.”

“Impossible,” chirruped the Father Inquisitor, “the lady has cast aside this world—renounced its vanities. She is now a sister of the Convent of Saint Mary of

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Brozas. She has taken the solemn vows! I myself laid them upon her."

"Then, by the head of Cromwell, you yourself will take the vows off, or I shall take your head from off your shoulders and level to the ground the Convent of Saint Mary of Brozas. I swear it by——"

But he did not finish. The little Jesuit held up his hands.

"The vow is not final—it shall be as the sister wills. She has not yet taken the black veil."

"White veil or black veil, or green veil or red veil," quoth Umphray, "it shall be as *I* will, and that right speedily!"

.
While we sailed for the island of Puerto Rico, Umphray told us all that had passed since we were carried off, and I had left him standing over his own open grave in the limekiln of Provost Partan. He told how by favour of the King's Advocate he had gotten letters of introduction to the Governors of Jamaica and Barbadoes, commanding them to put at his disposition all his Majesty's available sea forces within their jurisdiction. Armed with this he hurried to Abercairn, where he had put into commission the best and soundest fighting brig that ever cleared from any Scottish anchorage. Her he had fitted out under letters of marque, and put a notable crew aboard—all the most daring blades of half a dozen ports. He told us how long he had searched before he discovered the whereabouts of the buccaneers' city of refuge, which he finally heard of from one of a former crew married in Barbadoes and settled down in respectability upon his gains.

Then he proceeded to recount how he and the commanders of his Majesty's two vessels had arrived too late

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to capture their prey, but just in time to take Captain Keys and his desperadoes after a stiff fight. The captain and the ringleaders had been promptly hanged for a hundred enormities, and that in spite of Captain Keys' quasi-commission from the Governor of the New England plantations. They were just about to burn the place and depart when Eborra was brought in with his strange message. The rest we knew.

As to those who had been left behind in Scotland, Umphray Spurway had no very recent news. My poor grandmother was dead, and my uncle John in full possession of the New Milns properties. That was all he could tell me.

"But we will flit him," said Umphray, "and that as soon as we get your mother out of the clutches of these gentry!"

He indicated the poop where the Grand Inquisitor and Don Nicholas were walking up and down in grave converse.

.

It is not necessary that I should write down the tale of the sack of Puerto Rico by the English. It is written in all the histories of these parts, as well as by Mr. Champlain, the Frenchman, in his very entertaining travels. Besides, these are things that it is not very pleasant to remember as being done by men of our nation. Yet, though an immense booty was taken, there was no brutality to women and little vindictiveness, save to the more cruel of the slave-drivers, whom the marines and sailor men chivvied all over the island as hares are coursed on the holms of Moreham. And they received as little mercy as poor puss when caught.

As soon as the capture of the castle and town was assured (and they were carried at one charge, as it were by

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the mere wind of the assailants' attack), Umphray and a strong party hastened towards the Monastery of Saint John, and the Convent of Saint Mary of Brozas. At the first breath of the assault upon the town many of the blacks and mulattoes, thinking that the pirates had come and that a period of universal rapine would begin, made an assault upon the nunnery. They had even liberated some of the worst of the chain gang, brutal ruffians, sentenced for crimes done on the islands, not heretics from Old Spain, like Jean Carrel of Carcassonne and his brethren.

The nuns had barricaded themselves in their chapel, and when we arrived the ruffians were engaged in smoking them out like bees. We could hear their loud shoutings and see the reek beginning to swirl up from the gates and door against which the fagots were piled.

"Now let them have it, lads!" cried Umphray to his men, and the Scottish muskets went off in a volley. The blacks and convicts ran this way and that like caged rats, and were shot down as they fled or bayoneted as they crouched in corners. Then we called that the doors be opened, but the crying of the servitors and the chanting of the sisters for a time prevented those inside from hearing us.

Meanwhile, however, in spite of our scattering it outside, the fire was gaining rapidly and there was no time to lose. So Umphray and his ship's captain slung a mahogany pole for a battering ram and forthwith drove down the doors.

We streamed in, and Anna, who knew the place, led us at once to the chapel. I shall never forget the sight which greeted us when she threw open the doors—the whole interior lit as for a high festival, the silver lamps a-swing in the choir, the tall candles shining down on the

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gold and tinsel of the decorations. And on the floor we saw as it were a crowd of dark forms, the sisters rank on rank between us and the altar, all kneeling with clasped hands, their crucifixes upheld as if to withstand in the name of the Most Merciful the inroads of the brutal mob.

In the very midst I discerned my mother. She was kneeling beside Sister Agatha. She wore the dress of a neophyte of the order. She took no notice of either Anna or myself. But when the Yorkshireman's great figure, crowned with its steeple hat, filled up the doorway, she rose to her feet with a sudden glad cry.

"Umphray! Umphray!" she cried; "he has come! We are saved. God has sent me Umphray Spurway—even as I knew He would!"

And with her old quick impulsiveness she let beads, crucifix, and psalter drop clattering upon the floor. She threw back her veil and white forehead-band, and fell weeping into his arms.

"You have been so long, Umphray—so very long!" she moaned, without lifting her brow from his breast.

"I like this better than being a nun," said my mother, some days after, when we were once more on board the ship, and we all stood about her. Umphray had gone below to find a plaid to wrap about her, for the wind of the Atlantic was shrewd from the north.

"Nor do I think that Will Lucy could have been a very good Catholic," she continued, "for he used to row over to see my father as often as ever a priest came to say mass. Besides, after all, it is best to stick to the religion one is born and brought up in."

By this time we were all happily on board the *Mary*, as Umphray had called his vessel—that is, all save Eborra and Janet Mark. The latter welcomed her Com-

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mandante back with happiness in her eyes, scarcely dimmed by the fact that his Majesty's marines had made firewood of the red-and-gold coach. The news of Saul Mark's death (and perhaps also of that of my father) had made a new woman of her. From this time forth she went no more in fear of the mouse in the wainseot. And Don Nicholas, reëstablished in his governorship with little loss save of the household gear that had been plundered, kissed with more than his ancient affection the plump hand of Donna Juanita Silveda.

The Grand Inquisitor was shipped back to Spain by the *San Estèban*, which, having been left on the opposite side of the Isle of the Winds, escaped capture, and came into Puerto Rico three days after the English had taken ship again. His Majesty's vessels, however, broke up the chain gangs, and gave all a free passage to Jamaica or New England, where they were to be permitted to settle. Jean Carrel, however, elected to return with Umphray Spurway, having a desire to learn the English and Scottish weaving. And so he came on board with us, improving daily with the sea breezes and the stern Scots diet of oatmeal three times a day.

It was our one unhappiness that perforce we must leave Eborra behind us. We would have given much to have brought him with us. Umphray offered him a livelihood if he would return. But at the thought of a new country and settled habits he declined.

"Eborra will die out of the woods!" he said, smiling. "He will go back to the Isle of the Winds and keep guard over Morgan's treasure."

So, since no better might be, Umphray gave him muskets and ammunition, together with an excellent half-decked boat which he bought for him in Puerto Rico. He would take no money, but we loaded his little ship

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with all that makes wealth in these parts. Before he bade us good-bye he told us that his mother was dead. She died the same night Philip Stansfield leaped into the fiery abyss with Saul Mark in his arms. She had stood upon a point of rock near the castle all the evening, muttering incantations and stretching her hands out towards the sea, till some of the guard threatened to shoot her for a witch. But soon after midnight she had broken into a song, singing in a glad strong voice like that of a young woman. No white man knew the meaning of that song, but down in the negro quarters the blacks crouched and sweated with fear in the darkness.

“That is the death song!” they whispered. “Obeah surely comes now to claim his own!”

And from the sea horizon towards the Isle of the Winds there came a sound of mighty thundering.

In the morning the sentinel looked, and lo! there upon the rock lay the witch woman, dead, prone on her face even as she had fallen, her skinny arms and clawed hands stretched out towards the place of her desire.

CHAPTER LII

TUTOR AT LAW

It was night when we arrived in the town of Abercairn. The *Mary* cast anchor, by a curious chance, almost in the same place from which the *Corramantee* had set sail. It seemed most marvellously strange to sit on deck in the earliest morning, and see the faint glimmer of the little whitewashed row of houses about the quay, and then, as the dawn came on, to listen to the cocks beginning to crow in the scattered landward farm-towns.

In the morning I was to go to claim my inheritance without delay, Will Bowman and Umphray Spurway accompanying me. Anna and my mother were to remain on board till we made things ready for them at the Miln House, or if my adventure with my uncle should fall out well, at the Great House of New Milns. When we landed there was a prodigious gathering of folk on the quay to meet us, and foremost among those who stood there was Provost Gregory Partan.

"Oh, lads, lads!" he cried ere we got up the steps, "saw ye ocht o' my bonny ship the *Corramantee*—that I in my innocence delivered into the hands of wicked and designing men?"

He cried the words down to us before we had time to grasp a hand or answer any of the warm greetings which were showered upon us.

"The *Corramantee* was a common pirate, sir," said

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Umphray sternly, "and the men you put in charge of her were——"

Here he stopped as if not willing to say anything against the dead, or perhaps because he thought of Anna and me.

"Oh, sirce me, dinna say that they turned oot blackguards—the like was never kenned! And sae muckle o' my guid gear in their handlin'. Is there nocht saved—nocht ava' o' a' my venture?"

"Stand out of my way, Provost Partan—I have nothing to do with you," said the Englishman; "the deaths of many honest folk are upon your conscience!"

"Na, na, guid Master Spurway, say not so," cried the Provost in some distress. "I was but as a lamb in the midst of wolves. I kenned naething o' ony ill-doings beyond the seas!"

"Sir!" cried Umphray, with decision, "the blood of those young children entrapped into your foul hole of a limekiln, sold into slavery, dead or dying of ill-usage and cruelty in canebrake and plantation, shall never cease to lie at your door!"

"No at mine, no at mine," wailed the Provost; "tak' tent o' your words. It canna be proven that ever I handled a plack o' the price. What kenned I o' ony nefarious practices? But tell me, guid Maister Spurway, is there like to be no a farthin' savit? Is a' tint even unto the uttermost? Aweel, aweel, gin that be sae, the Lord's will be done! It is, indeed, a blessed thing to hae the consolations of releegion in yin's heart—aye, a great and solit comfort!"

We three left the Provost to this consolation and proceeded on our way. The little house at the corner of the Vennel was empty, the key in the possession of a neighbour who had had the kindness to keep on fires in the

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winter season. But we did not bide there. Much more remained for us to do.

And, oh! when we had gotten us horses and taken the track over the hills, it was a joy beyond words to feel the air blow caller in our faces, to discern the Miln House shining afar among its willow copses, and then to hear the weir singing and the mill-wheel clattering on as of yore. The weavers were all at their tasks, as if Umphray had simply stepped out to show hospitality to a customer.

Yet neither did we tarry here, great as our desire was to do so. My uncle was reported at home. He had spent much of his time lately at the Great House, oftentimes riding all the way from his law business in Edinburgh.

It was the deep silence of noon, a brooding day sullen with great heat, when I turned down the avenue past the Lodge Yett, where I had so often played. I could not help looking for the window through which—but I had other matters to think upon to-day. Will Bowman was on one side of me, Umphray on the other. The prince was surely coming to his own at last. Then came the turn of the avenue at which, high above the great beeches, I saw the turrets of the house of New Milns. All was in excellent order—better, I think, than in my grandfather's time.

“He will show fight,” said Will; “surely the man will never give up all this without a struggle!”

“Give it up he shall—I judge him to be lawyer enough to know that he must,” said Umphray, the corners of his mouth going grimly down. “Philip, lad, are you feared to face him? Would you desire witnesses? We will come in with you if you do!”

I laughed and shook my head.

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“I trow no,” said I, answering him in a proverb. “He who has faced the lion fears na the tod!”

But all the same, my heart was beating rarely when I left these two at the angle of the green plantation nearest to the front door. I marched straight up the steps and lifted the knocker, wondering to find myself so near it. It used to be so high above my head. About and within brooded a silence which could be felt, and the noise of my knocking reverberated down the passages like thunder.

Yet for all my courage I kept my hand in my tail-coat, where a pistol was hidden, till at last I heard steps come slowly and a little totteringly down the hall. The door swung cautiously back, and lo! before me, clad in his ancient bottle-green coat, I saw—Caleb Clinka-berry!

His hair was brushed more carefully from one side to the other of his bald head in a kind of alternate and make-shift thatching. At sight of me he gasped, and fell back a step.

“Is it a spirit—a visitation—my poor lad’s ghost?” he cried.

“No,” said I, holding out my hand heartily. “I am indeed your lad in the flesh. But what do you here, Caleb? Where is my uncle? Ken you that my mother is home safe and sound?”

“Soothly, soothly,” cried the old man, “hasten me not. Thy mother, didst thou say, my little Mary come home? The Lord of the High Mercies be thanked! I have prayed Him for this. Thine uncle—why, thine uncle is ben there in his study at this moment. Thou shalt find him a changed man. And little Mary home again! Faith, I must pack my box and make me ready—for the little Mary is come home! She will not know

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where to find so much as a petticoat in the Yett House till old Caleb finds it for her. Yet is the place in order. Would it please thee to step down there?"

"Presently, presently, Caleb!" said I. "Now I must see my uncle—take me to him."

"Thy will and pleasure, sir—aye, aye, but he minds me of Sir James—the very model of Sir James. Mary's child, grown to be a man! Take thee to thy uncle, saidst thou? Yea and verily, that will I, and bide at the door also to hear what shall befall between thee!"

And with his grandest air the ancient major-domo preceded me to the room that had been my grandfather's, the same in which we had all sat at our wine that night when Sir James brought me home from the change-house.

He threw open the door wide to the wall.

"Sir Philip Stansfield, an it please thee, Master John!" he announced, like a herald ushering in a prince.

At that moment I was watching my uncle. He had been sitting at a desk, reading a book. And at the sound of the name he rose to his full height, gripping the tall back of the chair and staring at me as I stood in the doorway.

"I bid you good day, Uncle John!" I said—I fear too much like a challenge.

"Good day to you, young gentleman!" said he, courteously, not taking his eyes from my face.

"I want mine own, Uncle John," I continued: "this house and estate. They are mine!"

My uncle bowed with one hand on his heart.

"And pray who may you be, and what do you set up for, young sir?" said he, throwing his head backward and speaking as cool as the precentor reading out the lines two by two on Sacrament Sabbath morning.

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Yet for all that I could see very well that he knew me. I had my reply ready.

"I am Philip Stansfield the younger, son of Philip the elder, and grandson of Sir James—your nephew, and proprietor of the lands and heritages of New Milns and Moreham—as indeed very well you know."

"Gently, gently," said he; "the burden of proof lies with you. There has been some small breach of continuity. You will, I presume, allow so much. You are able, then, I take it, to make good your claim by reputable witnesses who have had knowledge of you during all the time of your absence from Scotland?"

"I can," I answered firmly.

"Meaning those gentlemen down there," he said shrewdly, indicating with his thumb the spot on the edge of the plantation where I had left Will Bowman and Umphray Spurway.

"Well—yes," I answered lamely enough, being, to tell truth, a little taken aback and not knowing what to make of my uncle's attitude.

"I wish they would keep off the grass—your grass that is, if the title be good!"

"That the Fifteen shall decide," said I grandly.

"Doubtless—doubtless," murmured my Uncle John, still looking out of the window; "and pray what can good Umphray the cloth-weaver prove?"

"That he found me a prisoner among the Spanish Papists!" I answered.

"A good claim to a Protestant estate anywhere in these islands!" he said, bowing ironically. "And the limber young gentleman who is kicking sods out of the sward with his heels—your sods, that is—what may have been his connection with you?"

"A chain," answered I, briskly enough, "a pair of

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steel chains attached to an iron belt about our several loins! ”

“ Ah,” he returned, meditatively, “ that is indeed what we term quaintly in our Scots law ‘ a bond of bottomry ’ ! ”

“ Uncle John,” said I, a little nettled, “ you carry it off very well, but all the same you know that you meant to kidnap me, to murder me! ”

“ Nephew presumptive,” returned he, quite unmoved, “ these words are actionable. Take notice, Caleb Clinkaberry, you with your ear at the keyhole out there! I may need you for a witness! ”

“ You set on Saul Mark, in whose company I last saw you, to carry me off with thirty other poor lads to sell for slaves in the Carolina plantations.”

“ And pray, sir, if it be a fair question, how much did you bring? ”

“ Tut,” said I impatiently, “ you quibble——”

“ Sir, you assert——”

“ Do you or do you not own me as heir to this estate? Deny me at your peril! ”

“ I deny you not (I wish to heaven these gentlemen would either come in or go away). But I will ask you a question: supposing you are the person whose name and style you assume, do you own me as your tutor nominate, as well as your *tutor legitim* or tutor at law? ”

“ I suppose you are both, though I understand not the law terms! ”

“ It is not required. Well, sir, I am a lawyer, a successful—I trust a fairly competent one. If you so desire I will give you my advice, for which you will pay me at the usual rates. These shall be taxed by the Court if you wish it.”

I smiled. I began to find my Uncle John vastly entertaining.

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He paused to catch my assent, as a minister does a Christian name at a baptism, and then he unlocked a little cupboard in the wall close by his hand.

“Here,” he said, “you will find duplicate copies of all accounts of my intrusions since the death of Sir James Stansfield. The originals, of which these are certified duplicates, are of course in my office in Edinburgh. Now, sir, for my advice—supposing that these grass-kicking gentlemen (whose hamstrings God confound!) can establish your title, actions will lie betwixt us—*directa et contraria tutelæ* as we phrase it—for count and reckoning of time of tutelage. Sir, I am going to Edinburgh immediately. Shall I have the pleasure of moving on your behalf at the next sederunt?”

“Uncle John,” said I, “I am utterly astonished—little did I expect——”

“I daresay not,” said he smiling, coldly but pleasantly; “neither, to tell the truth, did I. So long as you remained in foreign parts, I was your heir of destination. But there was always a possibility, now happily fructified into some probability—I speak without prejudice—that you might return. In that case I am your curator and these are my accounts, which I trust you will find correct, with natural deductions for my expenses in your service. If you discover, as I think you will, that the estates are in good heart, and that under my management nothing has been neglected—why, sir, I have a good law business in Edinburgh, as any lawyer will tell you, and many noble gentlemen do me the honour to trust me as their agent and doer. What say you? Shall I continue to act as yours?”

“Why, Uncle John,” I stammered, “I have not considered——”

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"I mean, supposing that you are satisfied with my present intrusions?"

I held out my hand. For the time being I forgot all about Saul Mark. I only remembered how my uncle used to make me paper boats to sail on the pond. They had a sail amidships and generally capsized a yard from shore.

He took my hand and shook it slightly—more, however, as a duty than a privilege.

"Ah, that is better," he said; "it is always best to keep these perquisites within families if possible. And there may be a good many pickings which are as well in the hands of a Stansfield as in those of any Dalrymple that ever ate pigs'-meat."

He handed me a bunch of keys from a nail at his elbow.

"You will find the servants civil, though Caleb behind the door there" (he raised his voice) "is getting into his dotage——"

We heard feet clattering indignantly down the corridor.

"The liquor and wines for immediate use are in the large gardein behind the curtain in the corner. This is the key of the cellar. The brandy is fair, the claret excellent. Good day to you, sir!"

He took his hat from a peg, and, with only a slight wave of the hand, went towards the door, leaving me astonished and dumbfounded. As he was going out he turned with his fingers on the handle.

"And, pardon me, if you wish to have any turf left, ask these gentlemen to come on to the gravel!"

And with that he was gone. I heard the pounding of a horse's hoofs beneath, and going mechanically to the window I saw my uncle riding rapidly down the avenue. And he never so much as turned his head to look at the

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Great House of New Milns which had been his for so long a time.

I went down to the front door, hardly able to speak for sheer astonishment. Then I beckoned to Umphray and Will and told them what had happened from the very first word, while all was still fresh in my memory.

"Did he not take it well?" I said. "Could ever any one have expected him to take it so?"

Umphray Spurway smiled and slowly nodded his head with a satisfied air.

"Blood—blood," he said: "that is where blood tells. For me, I should simply have broken your head. and kicked you down the stairs, young man."

"And I also!" agreed Will Bowman.

EPILOGUE

AND now, as my Uncle John would say, I must close the record. I write the last of these sheets on the afternoon of a Sabbath day in mine own house of New Milns. This day, at the morning diet of worship, Mr. John Bell was more than ordinary dreich, and that young imp of mischief, my son James, fatigued me with his exceeding restlessness. He takes the quality from a near relative, though he cannot sling stones as well as she could.

I saw my mother and Umphray to-day—Umphray (how I laughed!) standing very uncomfortably at the plate, for my mother had made him accept the eldership against his will.

“Though born and baptised an Episcopalian,” she said, “and with some connections with Papacy as well” (young Will Lucy?), “I have always been a convinced Presbyterian at heart. And so must you be, Umphray!”

Whereupon Umphray promised. His face was by-ordinar grave as I passed him this morning, yet methinks his farther eyelid quivered.

Nowadays we see but little of Will Bowman—far less than I could wish. I mentioned this to my mother, and asked her if she could imagine a reason.

“Why, of course,” she cried (we were alone together), “did you not know? He was always in love with Anna from the beginning!”

“That is nonsense, mother,” I answered, for the thing greatly astonished me. “Why, I have been with him

EPILOGUE

all these years and noticed nothing. Neither, I am sure, did Anna!"

Then it was that my mother laughed heartily; but the inwardness of her mirth I could not perceive.

"Trust a woman to know when a man loves her," she said, when she had finished, "and, for all that you think of her, your Anna is just like the rest."

Afterwards we went into the kirk, and the service was a solemn and appropriate one, though Mr. Bell was well-nigh an hour and a half at his discourse. He has been lecturing through "*Canticles*" for the past four years and a half, so naturally he could not find much that was new to say. But his text was exceedingly comfortable to me, and when he gave it out, Anna Mark put her hand into mine round our Jamie's back. It was: "*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it!*"

And it came into my head, sitting thus with my wife's hand in mine (but secretly, and as if to curb the Imp), that I should tell my mother of Philip Stansfield and his last words, which I had never yet done. I had spared her (as I thought) on board the *Mary*, finding her strange and upset with all her troubles. But now she was happily wedded and established at the Miln House. Nothing could fright her any more. She would go straight and tell Umphray, whatever secrecy she might promise.

So, sending on Anna with the Englishman, I told my mother all, as well as I could, of how Captain Stansfield had said at the last, "*Tell her that I did it for her sake!*"

But at the first sound of my late father's name she cried out shuddering, "I do not care to hear. Do not speak to me of Philip Stansfield or Saul Mark! They were both men of wrath!"

And then, letting go my arm, she forsook me, calling

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loudly on her husband, "Umphray, do not go so fast. I want you. You are always so forgetful and inconsiderate. You forget that at this present I am not strong!"

"Yes, Mary!" said Umphray gently, and turned back towards us.

My mother stooped to lift her kirtle a little to show her pretty shoes. Then she took Umphray's arm with a little happy jerk of possession. To hide a smile, as Anna's eyes met mine, I turned to help the Imp over the stile.

"James," I asked him sternly, "what was Mr. Bell's text this morning?"

"I forget," he answered prompt, as echo from the wood, "but I killed six flies on the book-board!"

And as I lifted him down I met Anna's eyes once again over our bairn's shoulder, and from what I saw in them I knew that she at least would never forget the text of Mr. John Bell's two hundred and twenty-fifth consecutive lecture and addition upon the Canticles, commonly called the Song of Solomon:

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it!"

THE END.

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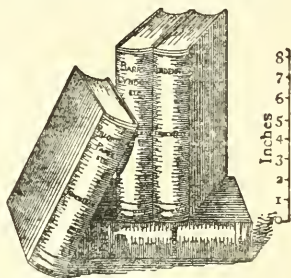
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